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Shocking moves

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A unique record?

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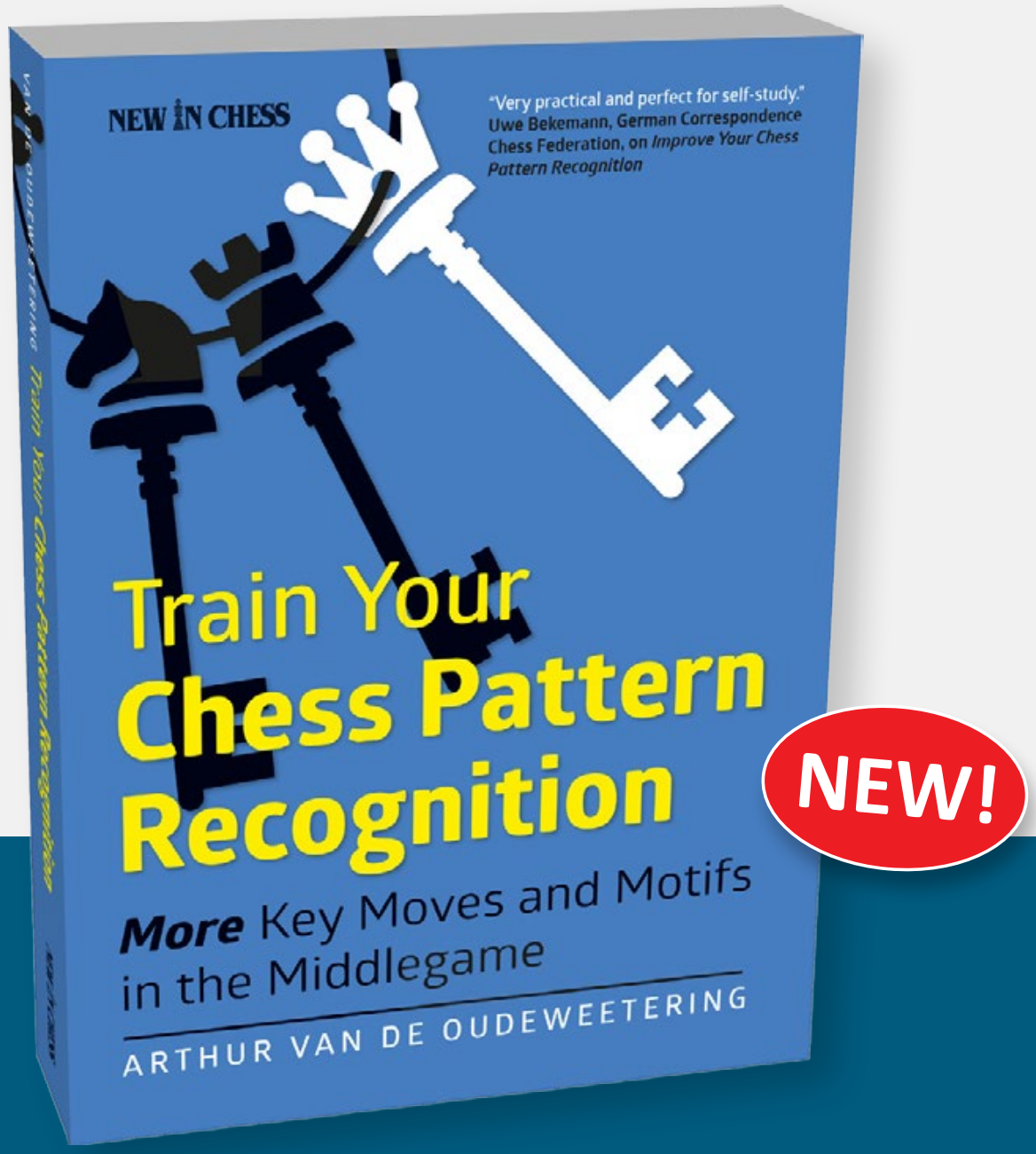
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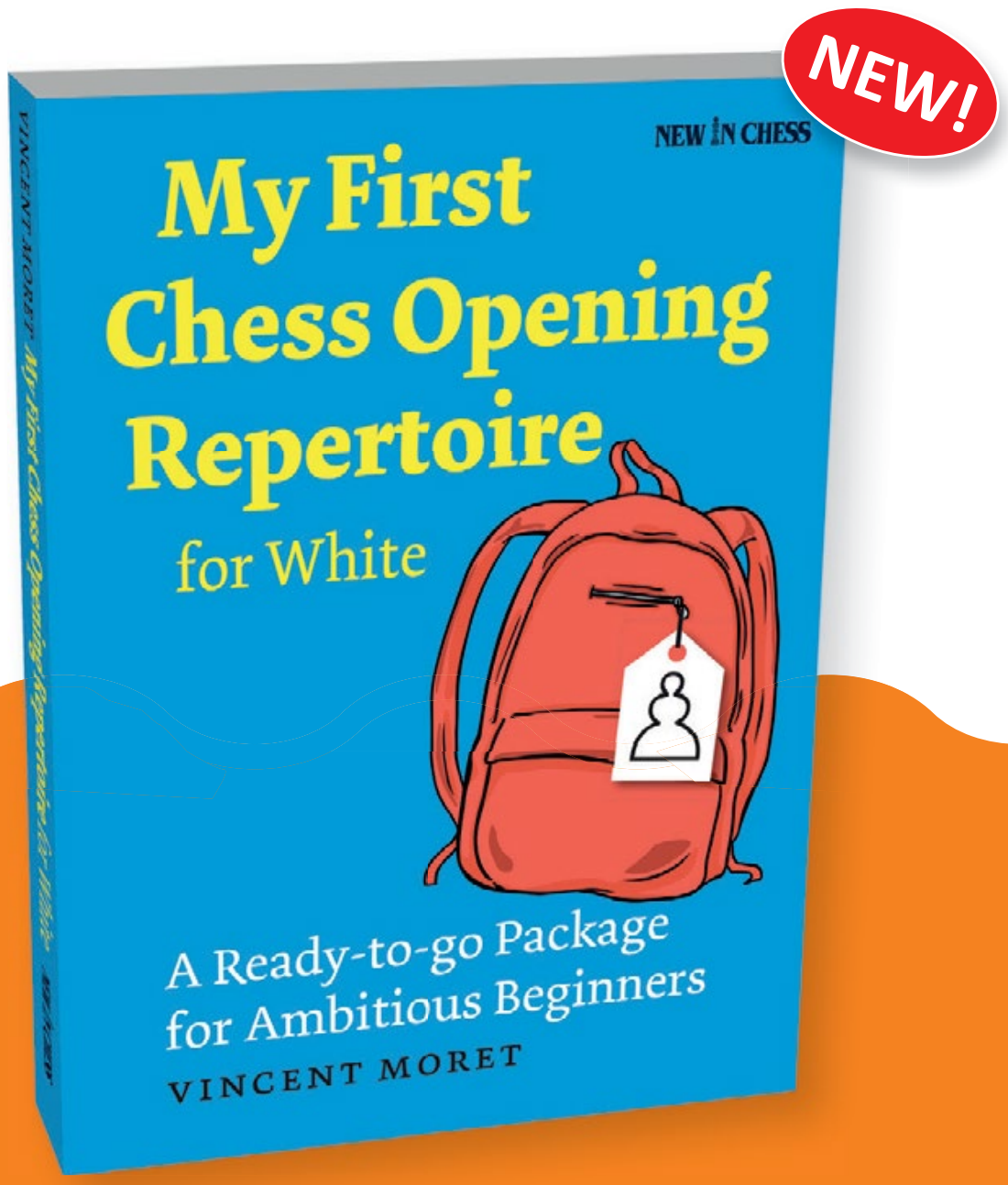

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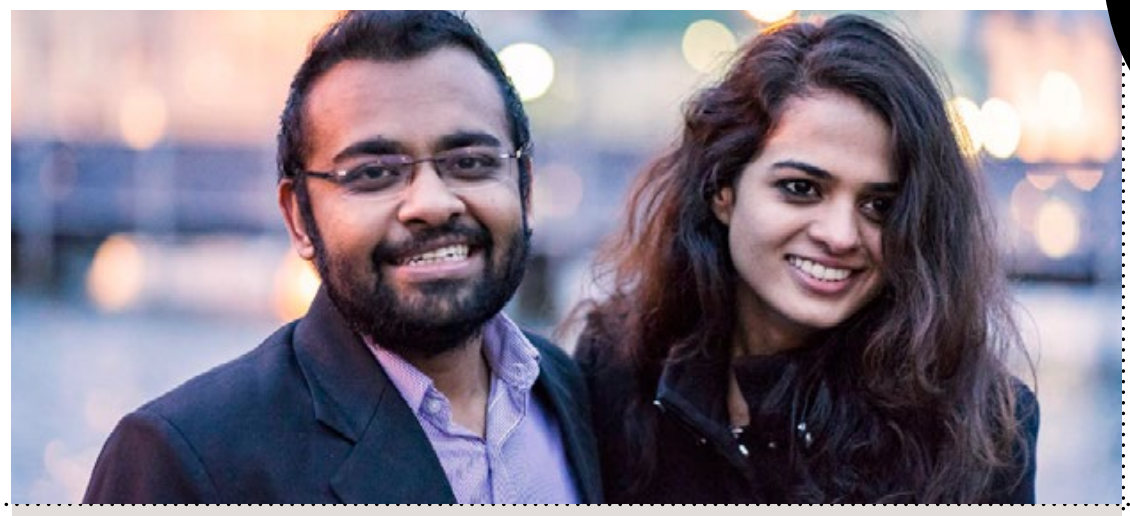

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PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Maria Emelianova, Vitaliy Hrabar, Amruta Mokal, Lennart Ootes, Berend Vonk

COVER
Sergey Karjakin: Lennart Ootes

'Boozy and angry, Rossolimo resigned by dropping his king into a steaming bowl of mussels.'

'I think the move to Russia was the critical change in my life, because from 2003 till 2009 I didn't have any support. When I started to work with Motylev and Dokhoian, within one year I became a top-10 player.' – *Sergey Karjakin*

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Dreams and plans

Sergey Karjakin could be forgiven for thinking he'd be World Champion by the age of 16, as he tells us in an exclusive interview. After all the former prodigy became a Grandmaster at the tender age of 12 years and 7 months. Just who was going to stop him? In the years that followed, Karjakin came to realize that the path to the top was not strewn with roses. What's more, while his meteoric rise stalled somewhat, Magnus Carlsen, also born in 1990, stole the limelight and claimed the highest title shortly before his 23rd birthday.

But Karjakin's dream didn't disappear, and it may well come true, as 13 years, 7 months and 16 days after he earned the GM title, the Russian has now gained the right to challenge Carlsen after winning the closely contested and dramatic Candidates' tournament in Moscow.

> '13 years, 7 months and 16 days after he earned the GM title, Karjakin has now gained the right to challenge Carlsen.'

We have an extensive on-the-spot report for you in this issue along with great annotated games. Not only by the winner, but also by the runner-up Fabiano Caruana, and special guest Wesley So. And of course by our own Anish Giri, who fortunately didn't lose his sense of humour with all his games ending in draws, no matter how promising his positions were.

We also bring you an interview with Hou Yifan, who reclaimed her world title by defeating Mariya Muzychuk 6-3 in Lviv, in a match that was mainly tense away from the board. The Chinese star speaks openly about her plans for the future and reveals that she will no longer play in the women's Grand Prix or the knock-out World Championship (which she doesn't see as a World Championship at all). Instead, she wants to improve her play and fight for top prizes in 'male' elite events.

If, like Hou Yifan, you also have good intentions and plan to improve your play (and who doesn't?), you will enjoy the palatable mix of entertainment and instruction in this issue. Opening surprises, endgame tips, shockers and stunning queen manoeuvres, they are all there. And Alekhine's computer moves, of course. What a giant!

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

Object of Affection

Chess became a passion and a ritual for Man Ray (1890-1976) after his rooftop encounter with fellow artist/chess fanatic Marcel Duchamp in New York in 1924. The pair, who were great friends, would often play throughout the night, believing that games allowed them to explore the repressed desires of the unconscious.

Inspired by Duchamp, Man Ray proved to be a prolific designer of chess sets. He designed his first chess set in 1920, with found wooden objects from his studio. The various sets which followed were predominantly of geometric shapes – and from 1945, Man Ray issued a limited number of signed sets in wood, aluminium and silver; and with professional machinists working on nearly all of his pieces.

But the Man Ray ivory chess set to be found at the Patrick Derom Gallery in Brussels, Belgium, and photographed here, is unique and listed as such in *Man Ray: Objets de mon affection*. It is a one-off, with no edition made of it, and no other Man Ray chess set being produced in ivory. The artist had it made for his wife Juliet and it comes with the gallery's price tag of just €225,000.

As befits one of the pioneers of the surrealist movement, Man Ray would reduce the design of his pieces to a clean, modern geometric form of cones, spheres and cylindrical shapes, such as in this special set, with its 32 ivory and red dyed pieces that also includes the artist's signature incised and painted over on the underside of the white king. ■

Man Ray

Movie Magnus

Formed as an arts response in the aftermath to the 9/11 attacks, Robert De Niro's Tribeca Film Festival (TFF) helped New York get back on its feet. De Niro's film festival has never been bigger than this year, with 6,626 submitted movies – and only 101 made the cut to be screened in April.

Magnus: a coming-of-age story shot over the years.

And of all the starry premieres at TFF, there's one with a chess connection we took note of: *Magnus*, directed by Norwegian filmmaker Benjamin Ree and written in conjunction with Linn-Jeanethe Kyed. The documentary is all about a certain 13-year-old Norwegian with designs on becoming the World Chess Champion.

But this isn't just any old film cobbled together by outsiders using archived footage: it is the true coming-of-age story – shot over a number of years by the filmmaker – with inside insight into how Magnus Carlsen battled his way from child prodigy to the top, telling of his personal sacrifices, special friendships and a caring and supportive family.

And if the dates of the TFF don't suit you, the good news is that after several closed market screenings the film was sold to several territories: Germany and Austria (NFP), Hong Kong (EDKO films Ltd.), former Yugoslavia (Discovery Film) and Benelux (September Film Rights), TV-rights to Israel (Yes DBS Satellite Services), with more territories currently in negotiation.

From a distance

And Magnus wasn't the only World Champion being the subject of a new documentary recently, because *Mikhail Tal. From a distance*, by the award-winning Latvian director Stanislav Tokalov, premiered on the evening of 31st March at the Splendid Palace in Riga, Latvia.

In the film, which includes archive footage and present-day interviews with many who knew and worked with the 8th World Champion, the director attempts to explore the feelings associated with the legend that is Mikhail Tal. 'For me this train – Tal, is a train that rushes, sweeps, passes over us and finally shatters into pieces,' the director said in an interview with the Latvian media in advance of the premier of his film.

Mikhail Tal: 'A train that passes over us and finally shatters into pieces.'

Finding Irina Krush

Remember our piece in the last issue about presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders going for the chess vote? Well, it seems his opponent, Secretary Hillary Clinton, immediately hit back to establish her chess credentials in the tight race between the two Democrats.

Frontrunner Clinton appeared recently on the 'Steve Harvey Show' and ended up playing the show's regular game spot, *Two Lies and a Truth*, to see if she and the daytime TV host could correctly guess which of the three contestants was the real GM Irina Krush just by their answers.

Two Lies and one Irina Krush on the Steve Harvey Show.

Hillary Clinton knows a chess player when she sees one.

Sitting on stools were Irina and two similarly dressed and styled young women who were well-briefed on the reigning US Women Champion's life and chess experiences. Clinton and Harvey then grilled each contestant with a series of Krush-related questions to establish just who the real Irina Krush was.

Of course, for chess aficionados, it was obvious who Irina Krush was from her doppelgängers, but kudos to Steve and Hillary for correctly finding the real deal to send the studio audience home each with a gift.

Trump'ed

And don't think it's the Democrats that are the only ones with a chess story to tell in election year. Far from it, because now stepping forward on the other side of the aisle is none other than the controversial Republican frontrunner, Donald J. Trump.

News reaches us that back in November 1997, long before his presidential run, 'The Donald' had gone to Public School 70 in the Bronx as Principal for a Day, as part of an inner city initiative to help raise money by adopting celebrities and top business people in the school's encatchment area. Trump Tower is, after all, not that far from P.S. 70, so what could possibly go wrong with this scenario?

It turned out that one of The Donald's first stops was at a bake sale being held by the school's chess team, which was short of money in their efforts to get to the national championships. So he pulled out a $1 million bill and dropped it in the basket. Like all $1 million bills, it was a fake. The Donald apparently used to keep a stash of them handy as hilarious gags. In the interests of fairness, we should point out that he also gave the team $200 in real money.

No idea what's wrong with this one.

But every cloud has a silver lining. When *The Daily News* reported on how the chess team had been 'Trump'ed', members of the public were so appalled by his behaviour that they sent enough money and then some for the school kids to make their trip to the national championships.

Under the hammer

A number of very remarkable early chess pieces will go under the hammer in April as part of Sotheby's Arts of the Islamic World auction in London. And all from a very remarkable collector indeed.

Collected by Lothar Schmid, the arbiter caught in the middle of the 1972 World Championship Cold-War clash between Boris Spassky and Bobby Fischer, the treasures include pieces dating back to the earliest known origins of our game.

A large Fatimid-dynasty rock crystal piece, thought to be a king or a queen, is expected to fetch between £30,000 and £50,000. Another lot, of 16 ivory pieces carved during the

Some of the unusual chess pieces that Lothar Schmid brought home from his travels.

Samanid Empire more than 1,000 years ago, is expected to fetch £20,000 to £30,000.

Compulsive collector Schmid, who died in 2013, built his collection over more than 60 years. He travelled the world both as a player and as an arbiter, and picked up items that he would show excitedly to his family on return to his home in Bamberg, Germany. 'He visited book shops and antique shops wherever he could,' Wolfgang Schmid, one of his three children, told the *Financial Times* recently. 'He was like a little boy when he got home to show us.'

Schmid's main interest was chess books and they form the heart of his collection. So far the family has not found a buyer for the 50,000-volume library of chess books. They want to sell the book collection as a whole, and that is only one reason why it has not been sold yet, as you could read in an extensive article in New In Chess 2014/1.

A big question remains what will happen to Schmid's legendary library.

NEW IN CHESS

The taxman cometh

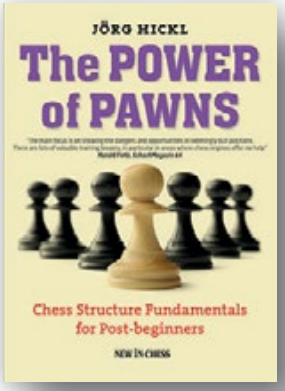
As the Panama Papers scandal recently began to unfold, and news of multi-millions of dollars hidden offshore in an exotic tax haven, shell corporations and dodgy 'friends' of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the mix, many out there probably sighed with relief that there's no such shady dealing going on in the chess world.

Looking down the list of offenders named and shamed by the media so far, the Café regulars couldn't find that certain someone with the initials of 'K.I.' they thought they might – but they did find an Icelandic Landsbanki account holder based in Reykjavik caught up in the scandal that was of interest to them, and it wasn't Björk or the country's recently felled Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson.

Among a group of celebrities revealed by the media was Bobby Fischer, who is reported to have had an offshore firm called Kettering Consultants Inc. that was founded in Luxembourg in 2007, according to *Viðskiptablaðið* and *the Guardian*. The Landsbanki branch in Luxembourg is said to have served as a middleman and oversaw his assets regarding Kettering Consultants. The company was 'owned' by four bearer shareholders, which gave it an extra degree of secrecy.

Fischer was granted Icelandic citizenship in 2005 following his battle with the US government that revolved, among other things, around tax payments – or lack thereof, as the case may be. He passed away just three months after the offshore company was founded, in 2008 – but Kettering Consultants was not closed until 2012. ■

NEW IN CHESS bestsellers



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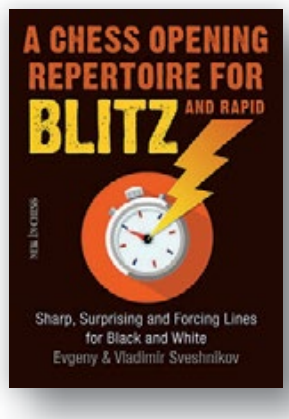
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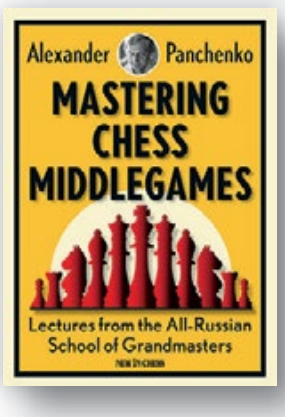

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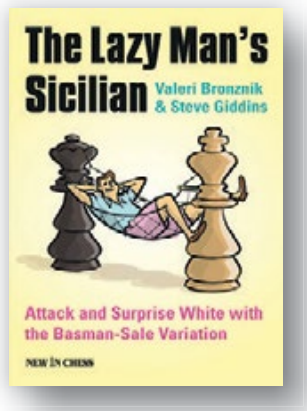
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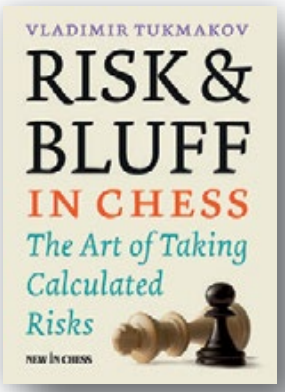

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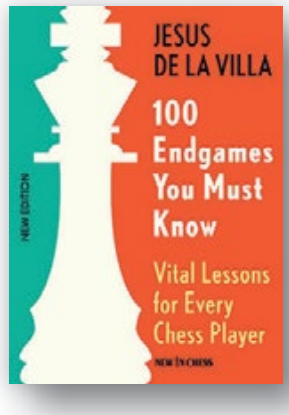

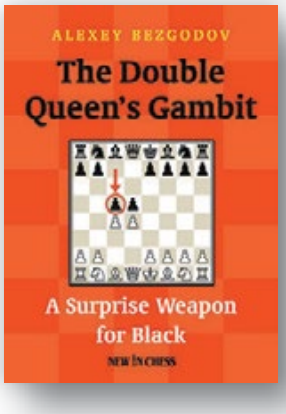

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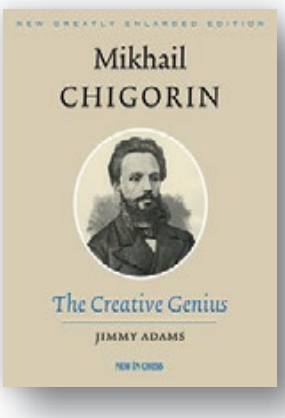

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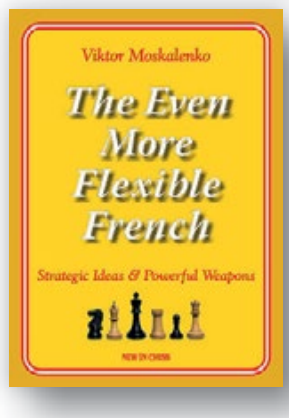

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Portoroz 1958?

Are you sure that the photo on page 58 of New In Chess 2016/2 that I received today is from Portoroz 1958? I think it is impossible. Fischer and Keres didn't play together in Portoroz, but they did meet in the Candidates' Tournament in Bled-Zagreb-Belgrade in 1959.

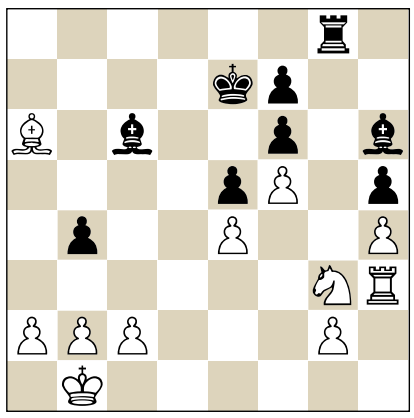
Zdenko Barbalić
Rijeka, Croatia

Editorial postscript:

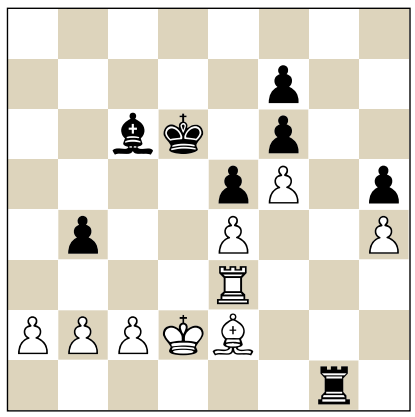
The photo was indeed taken during the Candidates' tournament in 1959, as various of our readers noted, including Pal Benko himself! He also sent us another correction, pointing out that he was not born on July 14, 1928, but on July 15 that year. And he shared an amusing story. In 1994 he met Donald Trump at the Trump Plaza, where Benko was watching the first game of the PCA Candidates' match between Kamsky and Kramnik (1-0, queen sac). When he was introduced to Trump as a GM, the latter turned to his secretary and said: 'What do you think? If I studied chess for one or two years I would become a GM.' Benko told him that this was not very likely as he had never heard of anyone who took up chess at a later age that became a GM.

Negi vs Marin duel

As usual I have enjoyed Matthew Sadler's reviews in New In Chess 2016/2. I also think that Parimarjan Negi's book on the Sicilian is really excellent. He often manages to see deeper than the computers. But in the resulting endgame in the Classical Sicilian I think that Mihail Marin (whose DVD was reviewed in issue 2016/1) is right and Black can defend. Sadler also hints in that direction with 'somehow I always believe the side with the two bishops'. As I had lost one previous analysis duel against Negi I now send my analysis to him and he agrees, and even found a stalemate idea, which is amazingly beautiful. So with extremely precise defence Black should be able to hold: **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f4 b5 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♔b1 ♕b6 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.f5 h5 14.h4 b4 15.♘e2 e5 16.♘g3 ♗h6 17.♕xd6 ♖d8 18.♕xd8+ ♕xd8 19.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 20.♗xa6 ♖g8 21.♖h3 ♔e7**



22.♗d3 And now, instead of the main line 22...♗d2?!: **22...♗e3!?** when Black's active pieces should be able to defend, but matters are not completely clear, e.g. **23.♘f1!?** (Negi) 23.♘e2 ♗f2 24.c3 (24.g3 ♖g4=) 24...bxc3 25.b4 (25.♘xc3 ♖xg2 26.b4 ♗d4 27.b5 ♗b7=) 25...♖xg2 26.♘xc3 (26.b5 ♗b7 27.♘xc3 ♔d6=) 26...♗d4 27.b5 ♗b7 28.♗c4 ♔d6 29.a4 ♔c5 30.♗xf7 ♔b4 31.♘d5+ ♗xd5 32.♗xd5 ♖g4=; 23.♘xh5 ♖xg2 24.c3 ♖g1+ 25.♔c2 ♗a4+ 26.b3 ♖g2+ 27.♔b1 ♖g1+ 28.♔b2 ♖g2+ 29.♗c2 bxc3+ 30.♔xc3 ♗d2+ 31.♔c4 ♗d7 32.a4 ♗e1 33.♗d1 ♗c8 34.b4 ♖b2 35.♖b3 ♖d2 36.♖d3 ♖b2 37.♗b3 ♗b7 38.b5 ♖h2 39.♘g3 ♖xh4 40.♖e3 ♗d2 41.♖f3 (41.♖e2 ♗a5 42.♗c2 ♖f4=) 41...♗a5 42.♗c2 ♔d6 43.♖d3+ ♔c7=. **23...♗c5! 24.♘e3** 24.♖g3 ♖d8 25.♔c1 (25.♘e3 ♖d4 26.♔c1 ♗xe4 27.♗xe4 ♖xe4 28.♘d5+ ♔d6 29.♘xf6 ♖xh4 30.c3 e4=) 25...♗f2 26.♖h3 ♖g8 27.♘e3 ♔d6 28.a3 ♗xe3+ 29.♖xe3 bxa3 30.bxa3 ♖xg2=. **24...♔d6 25.♔c1** 25.a3 bxa3 26.bxa3 ♗xe3 27.♖xe3 ♖xg2 28.♗e2 ♖h2 29.♗xh5 ♖xh4 30.♗f3 ♔c5 31.♖c3+ ♔b6 32.♔b2 ♖f4 33.♖e3 ♖h4=. **25...♗xe3+ 26.♖xe3 ♖xg2 27.♗e2 ♖g1+ 28.♔d2**



And now Negi found the amazing **28...♖g2** Instead of my suggestion 28...♖h1?!. **29.c3** 29.♔e1 ♖g1+!? 30.♔f2 ♖b1 31.♗xh5 ♖xb2 32.♗xf7 ♖xc2+ 33.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 34.♔xe2 ♗xe4 35.♗e6 ♔e7=. **29...♔c5 30.cxb4+ ♔d4!! 31.b3 ♗b5 32.a4 ♖h2! 33.axb5 ♖xe2+ 34.♔xe2** with a beautiful stalemate in the middle of the board. So it seems that the ball is back in White's court.

GM Karsten Müller
Hamburg, Germany

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Infographic

The Candidates: The Player Who Played the Best Won

It probably does not seem like a revelation to say that Sergey Karjakin, the player who won the 2016 Candidates' tournament to select a challenger for the World Championship, played better than the other players. But it was not just that he scored better than the other players, it was that he played better, too, according to statistical analysis of the moves of all the players in the tournament by Ken Regan, an associate professor of computer science at the University at Buffalo, who is also an International Master.

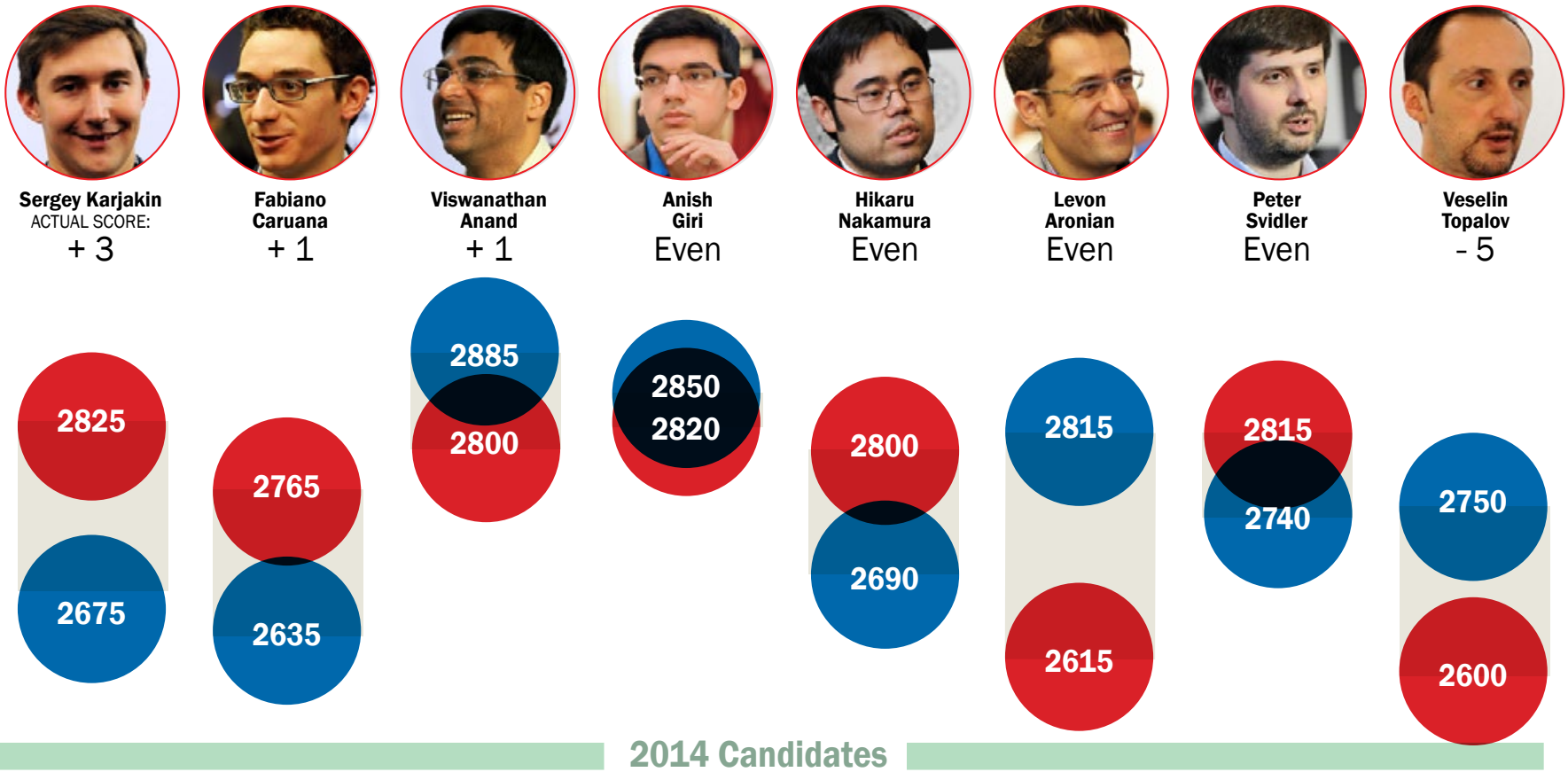
Dr. Regan has been working for years to construct models that try to accurately measure players' performance move-by-move, throughout their games. (Dr. Regan's research is also part of his work as a consultant to the FIDE Anti-Cheating Commission.)

While it may not be a surprise that Karjakin played better than the other players in the tournament, what is surprising is that some of the players who finished well-down in the standings, like Anish Giri and Peter Svidler, may have played only marginally worse than Karjakin. They may have performed worse because their opponents apparently played better than Karjakin's, and perhaps because their errors were at more critical moments. The same anomalies were true in the 2014 Candidates' as well, as the following graphic illustrates.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

Intrinsic performance ratings* (X) **Player** (X) **Opponents**

2016 Candidates



2014 Candidates

*The average rating level of all moves played. The figures have a large possible margin of error, but the confidence level that they are accurate is 95 percent.

Fair & Square

Alejandro Iñárritu: 'Every scene, the closer you get to the end, the more stressed you are. "Is my camera shaking too much? Who do I pan to next?" You have the fear of being the one who screws up. It was like constantly playing a tremendously hard chess game.'
(The Mexican back-to-back best director Oscar winner, on the difficulties of directing his 2014 winner, 'Birdman')

Ian Herbert: 'He was doing for football what Bobby Fischer was doing for chess, making football "sexy" many years before Ruud Gullit coined that word.'
(The football columnist for The Independent, paying tribute to the balletic genius of the late Johan Cruyff)

Steven Goff: 'Cruyff saw the field like a chessboard, his mind always two steps ahead, planning how to unlock a defence.'
(The Washington Post's tribute to football legend Johan Cruyff)

Stanley Kubrick: 'Among a great many other things that chess teaches you is to control the initial excitement you feel when you see something that looks good. It trains you to think before grabbing, and to think just as objectively when you're in trouble.'
(In a 1968 interview for Playboy)

Sophie Kinsella: 'Relationships are a battle. They are a chess game. And what did I do? I just threw all my chess pieces down on the board at once, and said, "Here! Have them all!"'
(The British chick lit author, in her novel Can You Keep a Secret?)

Kazuo Ishiguro: 'It was like when you make a move in chess and just as you take your finger off the piece, you see the mistake you've made, and there's this panic because you don't know yet the scale of disaster you've left yourself open to.'
(The multi-award-winning British novelist, screenwriter and short story writer, in his 2006 novel Never Let Me Go, as his main character finds himself in a tight spot)

Daniel Handler: 'An apocryphal story – the word "apocryphal" here means "obviously untrue" – tells of two people, long ago, who were very bored, and that instead of complaining about it they sat up all night and invented the game of chess so that everyone else in the world, on evenings when there is nothing to do, can also be bored by the perplexing and tedious game they invented.'
(The American novelist who is better known by his pen name Lemony Snicket, in his 2007 novel Horseradish: Bitter Truths You Can't Avoid)

Murray Campbell: 'It's really a dangerous business to say, "computers will never," and then say something after that.'
(The creator of IBM's Deep Blue, speaking to The Atlantic magazine in a feature celebrating the 20th anniversary of a computer beating a world champion for the first time at chess)

Richard Fenton: 'A man that will take back a move at chess will pick a pocket.'
(Wary advice from the Welsh topographer and poet – 1746-1821)

Pal Benko: 'Every move in the endgame is of the utmost importance because you are closer to the moment of truth.'

Hikaru Nakamura: 'The single most important thing in life is to believe in yourself regardless of what everyone else says.'

Ray Charles: 'I'm not Spassky, but I'll make it interesting for you.'
(The music legend's comment to a Los Angeles Times journalist as he challenged him to a game during an interview)

Jim Caron: 'It's like central banks are playing a never-ending game of chess with each other.'
(The Morgan Stanley Investment Manager, writing in an article on global currency devaluation, entitled Rates and Currencies are Pawns in a Global Game of Chess)

Alexander Kotov: 'Drawing general conclusions about your main weaknesses can provide a great stimulus to further growth.'

Bill Hartston: 'Chess is a contributor to net human unhappiness, since the pleasure of victory is greatly exceeded by the pain of defeat.'

Gustav Schenk: 'There must have been a time when men were demi-gods – or they could not have invented chess.'

Donald Trump: 'We all know that chess is a game of strategy. So is business. Think about that and develop a strategy starting today.'

Karjakin gets Russians in raptures

Immediately after he had earned the right to play for the World Championship, Sergey Karjakin was engulfed by journalists and also the days that followed were filled with countless interviews. And an appearance on the popular TV show Match! that he enjoyed greatly.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Those who had predicted a close and unpredictable race were proven right. Only on the very last day did local hero Sergey Karjakin decide the Candidates' tournament in Moscow in his favour with a win over his direct rival Fabiano Caruana. At long last a representative of the leading chess nation will play a world title match again. Karjakin dedicated his victory to Russia and to Crimea, where he was born. The match against Magnus Carlsen is scheduled for New York this November, but given the friction that has arisen between, on the one hand, the organizers, AGON, and on the other, FIDE and the Russian Chess Federation, this may no longer be such a dead certainty. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from Moscow.

Finally it happened – on the last day. As if someone had pushed a magic button, the Telegraph building was suddenly bustling like a beehive. Everywhere in the fifth-floor foyer, people stood talking, gesticulating, pointing at monitors, discussing possible moves and estimating chances. A privileged number of less than one hundred fans were breathlessly following the action in the playing hall, and whenever one of them came out, his or her place was immediately taken by someone from the queue outside. Suddenly we had Rublevsky, Sveshnikov, Dvoretsky, Dubov and other familiar faces in the house. Journalists and organizers nervously ran around and in the VIP room, where the temperature had risen considerably, you had to be very careful not to step on someone's toes.

Watching the excitement, it was

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Together with his manager Kiril Zangalis and Vladimir Potkin, one of his trainers, Sergey Karjakin is on his way to the last round. It was less than a ten minutes' walk along Tverskaya street from the Four Seasons Hotel, where the players were staying, to the Telegraph building.

hard to imagine that for most of the Candidates' tournament this had been a very quiet place. The Telegraph building is on Tverskaya street, and has been turned into a modern office complex (meaning stripped walls, removed ceilings and pretty basic-looking) where start-ups specializing in the new media work on realizing their dreams. And it doesn't get more central in Moscow. On an average day, only a few dozen spectators would turn up, and during the first half of the tournament only a handful would watch the players live. Maybe the entrance fee kept Muscovites away in these days of economic crisis. Or maybe they preferred the office building elsewhere in the city, where Sergey Shipov and Ilya Smirin provided commentary in Russian. But these explanations are hardly satisfactory. After all, their commentary could be followed on headphones at the venue. It was something of a mystery why the most important chess tournament of the year attracted so few visitors in the heart of the capital of chess, at only a stone's throw from the Kremlin,

The full house on the final day was easier to explain, as Russia's Sergey Karjakin had entered the final round in a highly favourable position. Karjakin was tied for first with Fabiano Caruana. Vishy Anand followed half a point off the pace and was no longer in contention. The issue was going to be decided between the two youngsters. Karjakin held all the trumps. He was White in his last game and had draw odds. The tiebreak rules said that, normally speaking, a draw would be enough to clinch victory, since Karjakin had won more games than Caruana. However, a draw would not suffice if Anand beat Peter Svidler with the black pieces. In that case, the tiebreak rules favoured Caruana, who had a plus score against Anand. Confused? You are forgiven. It wasn't for nothing that during this last round many people restated their opinion that a tie for first place in a Candidates' tournament should always be decided by tiebreak games.

As was to be expected, the game between Karjakin and Caruana developed slowly. There was no reason to think the American would go for broke. Caruana opted for a Rauzer Sicilian to get a position in which at some point he might go looking for chances. Patience was the word, and putting further pressure on Karjakin the plan. As the tension built, Caruana seemed to make progress when on move 36 his rook went to e4. Any 'normal' move by White would now have left Caruana with a distinct initiative, but as immediately indicated by the computer, Karjakin could also play a smashing rook sacrifice. Would he see it? His fans held their breath and muttered exhortations at the monitors showing the position. Time stood still. Then Karjakin sacrificed his rook, and two moves later he played the killing queen move that was the main point of the sac. The rest was easy, and when Caruana resigned on move 42, the crowd erupted in euphoria, shouting, whistling and applauding their hero.

One of the first people to rush up to Karjakin was Kiril Zangalis, his manager, who is also the PR-manager of the Russian Chess Federation. Their embrace said it all. For years they had been hoping for this moment. Finally a Russian was going to play in a World Championship match again. During the last days of the tournament, it had been almost comical to watch the ebullient and emotional Zangalis as he shuttled between hope and despair while watching his ward's games. Now there was just joy, and in the days that followed he accompanied Karjakin to endless interviews, official receptions and radio and television appearances.

Karjakin's win brought a closely contested Candidates' tournament to an end. Only one player finished on a minus-score, Veselin Topalov, and except for him all participants had real chances to win the right to challenge Magnus Carlsen. Topalov lost five games but never his good mood. As he explained more than once, he had hardly prepared for the event and saw his result as a further indication that his chances to fight for the highest title are probably gone. One FIDE official suggested that the Bulgarian's main reason to play in Moscow had been to

keep out his foe Vladimir Kramnik, who was the first reserve. But that was nonsense, as in reality the first substitute was Dmitry Jakovenko. Still, one could argue that Kramnik was the only top player missing in the Candidates', as the field otherwise consisted of all the top players one could have hoped for.

Amazing composure

Given the close result and the huge stakes, it was amazing to see how calmly and professionally all of the others took their loss, after all a Candidates' tournament has only one winner and for the rest only losers.

Caruana drew all his games in the first half, but with wins over Nakamura in Round 8 and Anand in Round 10 he moved up to share the lead. The American was not too upset about his last-round loss and rightly felt that he had lost the tournament in the penultimate round, when he let a big advantage slip against Svidler. That he also missed chances in the rook and bishop vs. rook endgame he ended up in, he found less dramatic. 'I had maybe five minutes on the clock and I remembered the basic idea, but I'd forgotten how to execute it. I don't think it's easy unless you really memorize it. And maybe that's something a top player should do. But I was more disappointed by what happened before, because it was a fairly trivial technical task before I just ruined it. I basically missed most of my chances of winning the tournament in that penultimate round.'

For a player seen by many as the favourite, Caruana was remarkably relaxed all through the event, accessible, and always ready to speak to the press. 'I would not say I was a pre-tournament favourite. I had a slightly higher rating, and perhaps my results over the past few years had been enough to call me the favourite. But as we saw, it was very close right up to the end. Vishy, Levon, Karjakin and I were all leading at different points. I came to Moscow very sick – high temperature and generally feeling quite lousy, but it turned out to have no effect on the tournament. So I just kind of relaxed right from the start. I had to. It would have been foolish to put unnecessary stress on myself. It didn't make sense to get worked up about any one game.'

When I wonder whether he kept telling himself this, he comes up with an unexpected yet healthy life philosophy. 'Ah, I don't know. Life is pretty long. Well, at least it seems like that, although maybe not on a cosmic scale. In any case I will have more chances in the future. Of course I wanted to take my chance now, but it just didn't work out. I am disappointed and missed a lot of chances, but I don't feel too bad about how I played. I tried my best to fight for it up till the end, and I was a bit unlucky in terms of the tiebreaks, but at the end of the day, Karjakin just showed better chess and deserved this.'

'Number Two player in history'

If he hadn't had such an amazing career behind him, Vishy Anand might have been called the sensation of Moscow. It seemed time for fresh blood and outside India there cannot have been many fans hoping for a third Carlsen-Anand match, but the Indian legend must have thought that this was not his problem. His first-round win against Topalov showed that he had not come to please anyone except himself. In Round 4, he lost to Karjakin in an excellent game by the Russian, but with wins against Svidler and Aronian he climbed to plus-2. A loss against Caruana, who showed excellent opening preparation, hurt, but in Round 11 Anand hit back with an important win against Karjakin. Was the former World Champion going to pull it off again? No, the next day the rollercoaster ground to a halt with another loss, this time to Nakamura, which essentially signalled the end of his aspirations.

Nakamura was so impressed by Anand's overall performance that he said: 'I already thought Vishy was brilliant before this event, but to see how he performed here, with all the other top players, scoring so

NEW IN CHESS

It was hard to miss what was going on in the Telegraph building, but very few Muscovites visited the Candidates' tournament.

many victories and playing so well throughout... To me Vishy is clearly the Number Two player in history now, without a doubt, behind Garry.'

Anand himself was also pleased, and could not help but laugh when he said: 'I am not joking, but I was impressed by myself. After Norway I had not had a single tournament in which I won an Elo point. Which is kind of weird because I was feeling very good after Shamkir and Norway and Zurich last year. For a moment I even started to look up again, and then I kind of hit a wall. So, my performance in Zurich this year was nice. It gave me some confidence, but I had no idea what to expect here. I had four wins. But I kept having these stumbles as well. It was a bit of a mixed bag. I felt that with a little bit of effort it could have been an even better tournament, but of course I can't complain.' And when I refer to a remark after his lost match against Carlsen in Chennai, when he dismissed any thoughts of quitting chess by saying that he would play as long as it was fun and gave him pleasure, he smiles. 'Sure. This tournament has meant a lot in that sense.'

The best, most correct play

No fewer than four players finished on 50 percent. The most perfect 50 per cent was scored by Anish Giri, who drew all his games, a first in the history of the Candidates' tournament. Inevitably many jokes were made about his alleged lack of fighting spirit, but a closer look at his games reveals that it is little short of a miracle that all his games ended undecided. In fact, the Dutchman had good reason to be unhappy about his final result. As Nakamura said: 'If you look at the best play, the most correct play throughout the event, then Anish should have won. If you look at the bad positions he has had in the tournament there was maybe only one, against Fabiano, in the second round, when he was in serious trouble, but in his other games as Black he was never in any trouble, and with White he was pressing in quite a few of games. Looking at it like this, you could say that Anish played the best chess.' To which he added, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that on balance, he thought that Karjakin and Anand would have been the most deserving players.

> Vishy Anand: 'I am not joking, but I was impressed by myself.'

Missed opportunity

With one loss and one win, Peter Svidler never strayed far from the 50 per cent path either. And looking at the chances he missed in the first half, he, too, could imagine more positive scenarios. 'A sense of a tremendous missed opportunity prevails. Sad, to be honest. Once again I felt there was nothing here to worry about apart from myself. I had between three and five positions you would win on a good day. I have played in a number of Candidates' tournaments, and all in all you get the feeling that I belong there. It's not a fluke that I play in all of them. But I apparently lack something you need to win one of them. Judging by the results. I was hugely motivated and well prepared, and yet it did not click.' His problems were not only psychological but also physical. 'I don't want to be the caricature of a guy who blames his results on the weather, but I did have a very poor Russian winter. I spent the last two months on antibiotics, and that doesn't help; it does something to you. Stamina-wise I had issues here.'

Too relaxed

Easily the most disappointed participant, and he was too dejected to hide it, was Levon Aronian. Another Candidates' tournament that had failed to deliver what he had been working for so hard and hoping for so badly. Aronian got a wildcard when the Tashir Group, headed by Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, decided to sponsor the Candidates' tournament (most likely 'persuaded' by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, who also happens to be the

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President of the Armenian Chess Federation). Aronian shared the lead after eight rounds, but collapsed in the final rounds with losses to Anand and Svidler (an inexplicable but successful attempt to lose an equal position) that put paid to his hopes.

With a chess-crazy country rooting for you and your President more or less arranging your participation, the pressure must have been enormous, but Aronian denied that this had played a role. 'No, not really. I was relaxed. But being too relaxed didn't work. The pressure rose towards the end, just as in previous Candidates'. Certain games didn't work out the way they should have, I guess. I was putting high hopes on my game against Caruana, my game against Karjakin. I think I spent too much time on my moves here. That was a fatal mistake. I am not a great player in time-trouble generally. Of course it varies, but this time I messed up too much in time-trouble, making drastic mistakes. I spent a great deal of time on this tournament. I invested a lot of energy, my own and that of other people, and not winning it or even coming close just makes me very sad.'

AMRUTA MOKAL

AGON CEO Ilya Merenzon: 'Our business is a kind of start-up; you don't get it right the first day.'

J'adoube

One of the most talked-about games was that between Aronian and Nakamura, who also collected seven points. The American champion was on minus-2 after eight rounds, but admirably fought back with wins against Anand and Topalov in Rounds 12 and 13. Nakamura lost to Aronian when, in a position in which the Armenian had been shuffling his pieces around for a while, he picked up his king, only to realize that a king move would lose. What happened next showed how tense both players were. First Nakamura released the king and tried to correct his mistake by saying 'j'adoube', which didn't make a lot of sense. Then Aronian urged him to move the king, using words that he probably would not have used under more relaxed circumstances. Further insistence was not needed, as the arbiter was standing near. He told Nakamura to move the king, after which Nakamura quickly resigned. Upset by this loss, Nakamura avoided the press conference, a breach of the rules for which FIDE fined him by deducting 5 per cent of his prize-money.

Nakamura didn't know if this was really going to happen, since he had heard nothing from FIDE and only seen their press release. But he didn't care much. His foremost wish was to draw lessons from the tournament. Coming to Moscow after wins in Gibraltar and Zurich seemed encouraging, but now he also had to admit that his schedule had prevented him from preparing optimally. 'If people have a lot of time to prepare, like here, especially with the white pieces, they are going to find ways to put pressure on Black, and I think this is very different from a normal elite round-robin event, where this will be the case in some games, but not in all. I think it's actually very good to see this. A lot of people are saying that chess is slowly dying because of the high draw rate, so to see a lot of exciting games with lots of winning chances shows that chess still has quite a bit of life left in it.'

Legal action

Another issue that drew widespread attention was the decision of the organizers, AGON, to claim the exclusive rights to the live broadcast, essentially forbidding any other websites to show the moves of the games in realtime. Their threat with legal action against any website that broadcast the games was partly successful, as big sites like ChessBase and Chess.com decided not to take any risks and didn't show the games live. But other sites, e.g. Chess24 and ChessBomb, ignored AGON's warnings and broadcast the games anyway. According to Ilya Merenzon, AGON's CEO, legal action is being taken against all four sites that breached their exclusive rights, and he expects their efforts to be successful. 'Basically, we are saying that it costs substantial money to produce the content and that the live feed is the specific product that we are producing and paying for. And in order to use it and benefit financially, you need to acquire a licence, and if you

didn't acquire a licence and just took it without authorization and without incurring any costs – and some of the sites like Chess24 actually made commercial products out of it – it's unfair competition. It's logical. It's a commercial product and I don't see why we shouldn't benefit from it.'

AGON's wish to make money with the product they offered is understandable, and it will be interesting to see what their lawsuits will lead to. They will obviously hope that there will be a ruling in their favour before the start of the coming World Championship match.

What was less understandable was that they announced this measure only days before the start of the Candidates' and that their website didn't offer the revolutionary chess experience it had promised. It could not compete with the features on the other websites and did not have the level that most chess fans are used to. At first glance, the World Chess website looked attractively designed, but on closer inspection it was far from impressive. Typical for the lack of an eye for detail were the boards showing the games with the names of the players presented in such a manner that it was unclear who was White and who was Black.

As the tournament got underway, it became clear that as far as the organizers were concerned it had started way too early, as witness the many loose ends and many aspects that had received little attention or no attention at all. This gave rise to amusing incidents, like the traffic jams that would inevitably occur when a player went to the toilet and security guards shut off the 'road' between the press centre and the foyer with dark curtains for several minutes. As Nakamura put it bluntly, 'Except for the hotel (the new five-star Four Seasons), which was wonderful, everything was bad.' And then, slightly more diplomatically, 'I think that from an organizational point of view there were a lot of issues throughout the event. I didn't think the overall organization the greatest. It was below par; that was annoying.' He pointed at the VIP room next to the playing hall with a glass wall between them that proved far from sound-proof, but he could also have mentioned the food in the restaurant

> Hikaru Nakamura: 'Except for the hotel, which was wonderful, everything was bad.'

where the players had their meals. But then he was one of the players who quickly decided that they would eat in other restaurants at their own expense.

Ilya Merenzon had a patient ear for any complaint and promised to see what he could do. He even apologized for the quality of the official website, 'I realize that the product which we claim should be exclusive, should also be excellent. And we didn't do it perfectly.'

But he denied that the many loose ends that had to be fixed during the event had been frustrating. 'No, it was not frustrating; it's part of the job. Of course I would like it to be excellent, but I don't think there is a chance in hell that you can do that; you actually have to learn a lot of things. That's how start-ups work. Our business is a kind of start-up; you don't get it right the first day.'

Black caviar

During the days that I was in Moscow you often felt the friction that had grown between AGON and both FIDE and the Russian Chess Federation, who clearly had wanted to be more involved in the organization. Although they kept their criticism behind closed doors, you didn't get the impression that either of them was very happy to be part of an educational test case of what apparently has to be seen as a start-up.

The prize-giving took place in the playing hall, where everyone had to stand for an hour listening to speeches. The shortest speech was the one by the President of the Russian Chess Federation, Andrei Filatov, who limited himself to one sentence: 'Russia lives and breathes chess, and thanks everyone for this festive tournament and this victory.'

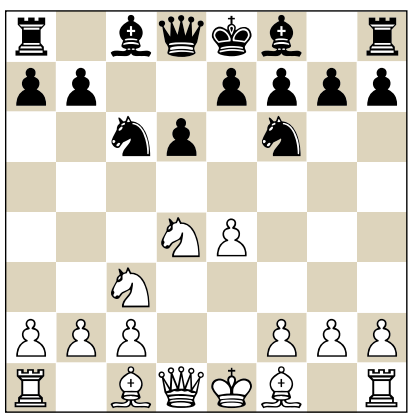
The Russian Chess Federation had already celebrated Karjakin's victory the night before in the splendid Chess Museum on Gogolevsky boulevard (where the renovation of the adjacent 'Central Chess Club' is almost completed). It was a wonderful evening with classical music and exquisite food. There was even black caviar – and many happy faces that can't wait to see their Sergey Karjakin take on Magnus Carlsen in New York.

Of course the first rumours began to do the rounds that the Russians might want to be involved in the organization of that match, so as to guarantee the highest standards. Or that they might prefer to move the match to another city. When I mentioned the rumours to Ilya Merenzon the next day, he categorically denied this possibility: 'There is no chance it's not going to be in New York. It's one hundred per cent. It's been set, announced, it's a hundred thousand per cent sure that it's not going to change. The reason they are saying this is that for years there has not been a stable schedule. But we signed long-term agreements. We even have plans for 2018 already, so we are planning far, far ahead.' And what about Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's mention of the Trump Tower as a possible venue? 'That I don't know anything about. If there is a good proposal we will look at it.'

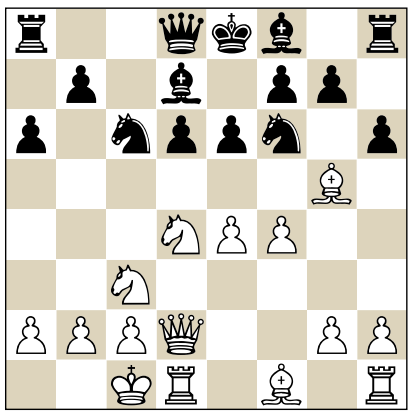
NOTES BY
Sergey Karjakin

SI 30.3 – B67
Sergey Karjakin
Fabiano Caruana
Moscow 2016 (14)

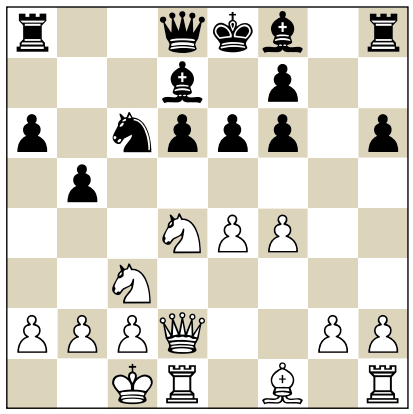
In this last round I simply wanted to concentrate on my game and play well.
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6



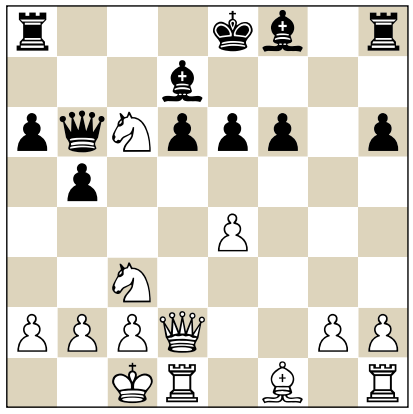
Fabiano pins his hopes on the complicated Rauzer Variation, which is currently not so popular.
6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f4 h6



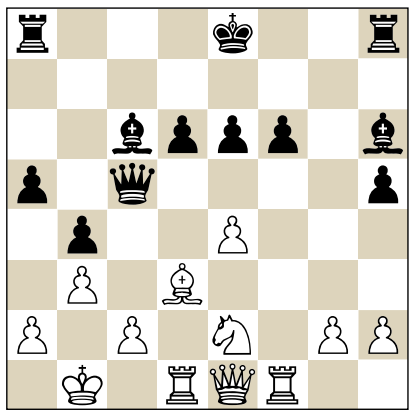
Black has very many different options, and, as it later transpired, a great supporter of this move order is the Chinese player Li Chao. (At the press conference Fabiano Caruana revealed that by way of preparation he had played through Li Chao's games with the Rauzer – ed.)
10.♗h4 b5 Here 10...♘xe4 is too provocative for such a game, because of 11.♕e1 ♘f6 12.♘f5!.
11.♗xf6 gxf6



12.f5 The idea of weakening the light squares around the black king seemed very tempting to me. Especially since, compared with variations with the pawn on h7, there is no longer the important bishop manoeuvre ...f8-h6-f4.
12...♕b6 13.fxe6 In view of Black's subsequent reaction, it would have been more accurate to play 13.♘xc6 ♕xc6 14.♗d3, retaining additional options.
13...fxe6 14.♘xc6

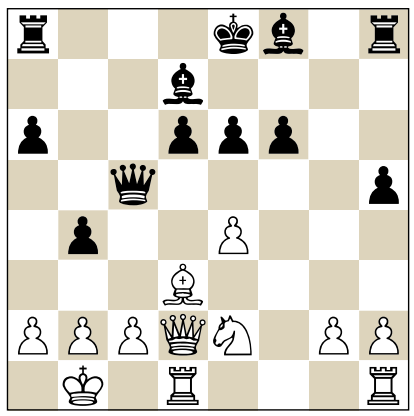


14...♕xc6! An interesting decision, by which Black defends his weaknesses in advance. It looks not so convincing for Black to play the similar 14...♗xc6 15.♗d3 h5 16.♔b1 b4 17.♘e2 ♕c5 18.♖hf1 ♗h6 19.♕e1 a5 20.b3,

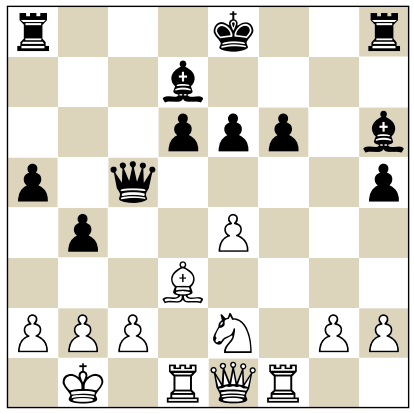


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

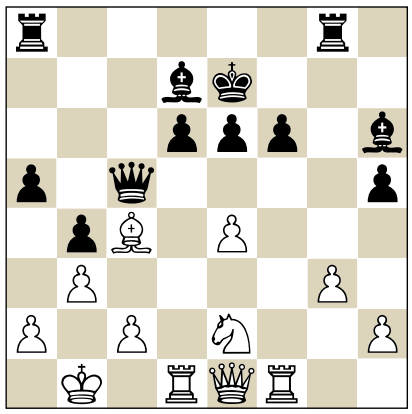
when he will have to spend time on defence.
15.♗d3 h5 16.♔b1 b4 16...♗h6 is inaccurate, as after 17.♕f2 White arranges his pieces more successfully.
17.♘e2 ♕c5



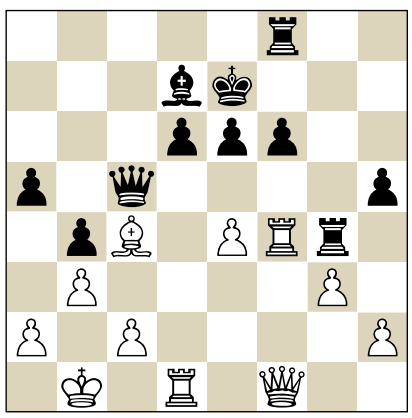
18.♖hf1
The typical central blow 18.e5! was stronger, when after the fairly forced 18...fxe5 19.♕g5 ♗e7 20.♕g7 ♖f8 21.♖hf1 ♖xf1 22.♖xf1 ♗c6 23.♖f7 d5 24.♗g6 ♔d8 25.♕xe5 ♗e8 26.♖g7 ♕f2 27.a3! (27.♕xh5 ♗xg6 28.♖xg6 ♔d7 is not so clear) 27...♕f6 28.♕d4!? ♕xd4 29.♘xd4 ♔d7 30.axb4 ♗xg6 31.♖xg6 e5 32.♘f3 e4 33.♘e5+ ♔c7 34.c3 an endgame with an advantage for White is reached. But that would have been a different story...
18...♗h6 19.♕e1 a5



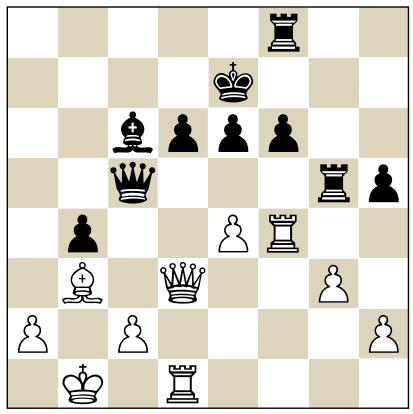
20.b3!
I like this move, after which the bishop is guaranteed a more worthy place.
20...♖g8
No benefit is achieved from the opening of the file after 20...a4 21.♗c4 axb3 22.♗xb3, when the white king feels quite secure.
21.g3 ♔e7 22.♗c4



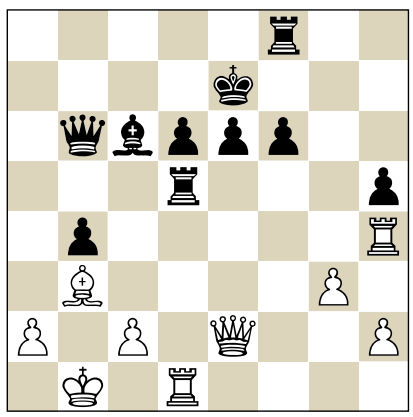
22...♗e3
Expressing it in ice-hockey terms – 'skilfully knocking the puck into the offensive zone!'
There were not so many active ideas after 22...♖g4 23.♘d4 a4 24.♖f3, when White has everything under control.
23.♖f3
23.♘f4 undoubtedly deserved consideration, when more concrete play arises.
23...♖g4 24.♕f1 ♖f8 25.♘f4 ♗xf4
It was dangerous for Black to try to retain the bishop after 25...♗d4 26.♖fd3 ♗e5 27.♘xh5.
26.♖xf4



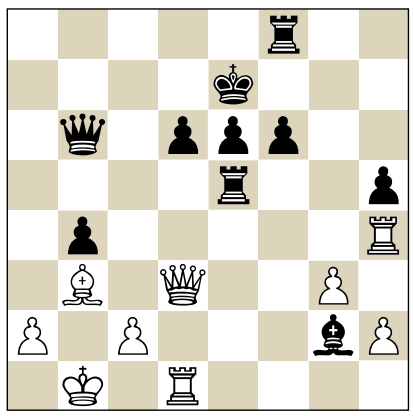
26...a4
As Fabiano rightly mentioned after the game, it was better to maintain the tension by 26...♗c6 27.♕d3 and now the interesting 27...♖f7!?, not allowing any immediate activity.
27.bxa4 ♗xa4 28.♕d3
The idea of the pawn sacrifice is now in the air.
28.♗b3 ♗xb3 29.axb3 was premature, as after 29...♖gg8 Black has the initiative.
28...♗c6 29.♗b3 ♖g5



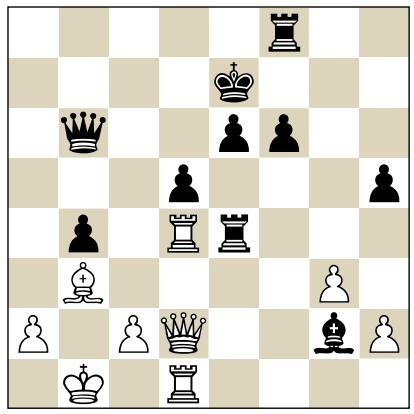
30.e5! There were no real threats by Black to strengthen his position, but I now wanted to clarify the situation.
30...♖xe5 31.♖c4
31.♕h7+ ♖f7 32.♕h8 was also interesting, with dynamic equality.
31...♖d5 32.♕e2 ♕b6 33.♖h4



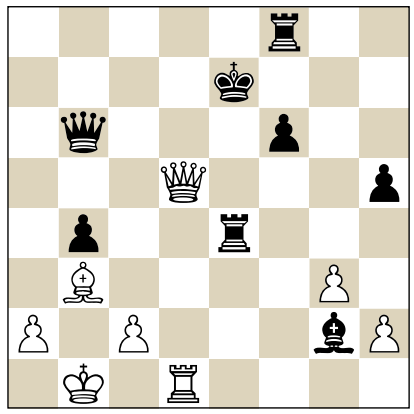
33...♖e5 An interesting possibility was pointed out after the game by Ian Nepomniachtchi: 33...♖xd1+ 34.♕xd1 ♕e3, which after 35.♖xb4 ♗e4 36.a3 would have led to a complicated position.
34.♕d3 ♗g2 After 34...d5 35.♕h7+ ♖f7 36.♕h8 it is difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces.



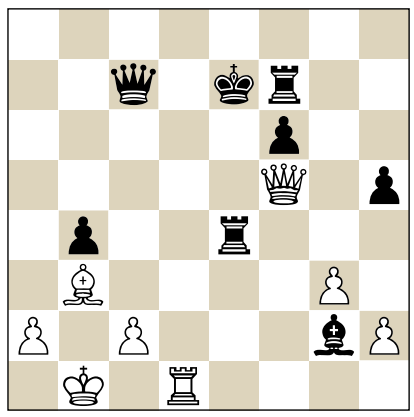
35.♖d4! Good centralization. **35...d5 36.♕d2 ♖e4?** I was expecting the variation 36...♗e4 37.♖xb4 ♕c6 38.♔b2 with approximate equality.



37.♖xd5! This decisive move came to mind quite quickly, but there was too much at stake to make it without checking the variations.
37...exd5 38.♕xd5



The lack of harmony in Black's ranks prevents him from defending his isolated king.
38...♕c7 The most resilient defence was 38...♖d4 39.♕xd4 ♕xd4 40.♖xd4 ♖b8, in the success of which it is hard to believe.
39.♕f5! ♖f7
Here Fabiano offered me a draw. Let us put this down to nervous tension and the excessively high stakes...



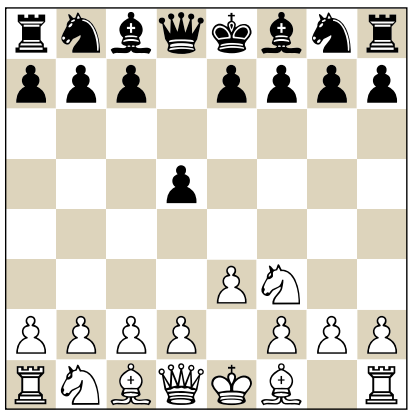
40.♗xf7 ♕e5 41.♖d7+ ♔f8 42.♖d8+
Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

RE 12.5 – A13
Sergey Karjakin
Vishy Anand
Moscow 2016 (4)

For Sergey Karjakin, the fourth round encounter with Anand was no doubt very important. The aged Tiger from Madras has always been a tough opponent for the ambitious Russian, but if one manages to get the Tiger out of his jungle, everything becomes possible.

1.♘f3 d5 2.e3!?



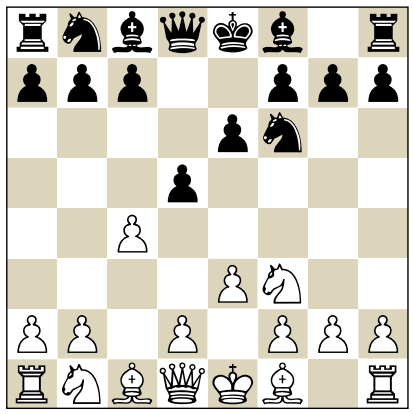
I was surprised that even some decent players thought that this was a sign of bad preparation. In fact, this is the modern approach, where surprise value and unpredictability are often the key to success. The game is evolving; deal with it.

2...♘f6

Vishy likes playing it solidly, and usually when it comes to sidelines, he goes for the ...♘f6, ...e6, ...♗e7 setup. Nothing can be wrong with that. If you feel ambitious with Black here, feel free to go ...c5, but do keep in mind that White is playing the Nimzo/Queen's Indian Defence, a good opening and with an extra tempo here, too.

'This is the modern approach, where surprise value and unpredictability are often the key to success.'

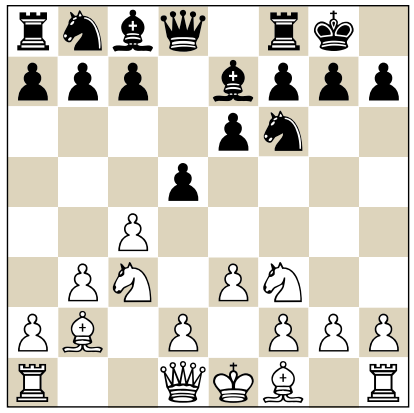
3.c4 e6



4.b3

As Sergey mentioned himself, in the previous Candidates' tournament he also played the e3 variation against Anand, but with the pawn on d4. Here he is staying more flexible and keeping his options open, in the style of his beloved Queen's Indian Defence.

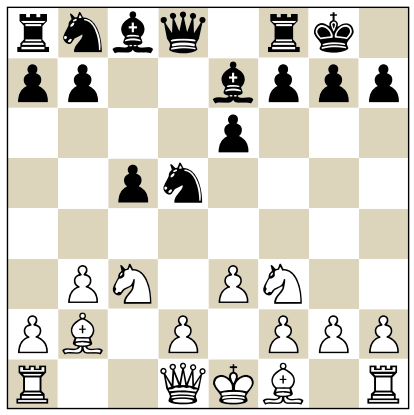
4...♗e7 5.♗b2 0-0 6.♘c3



6...c5 Very natural. 6...c6 would be a mite too timid, but just about any other move makes sense. For example 6...b6.

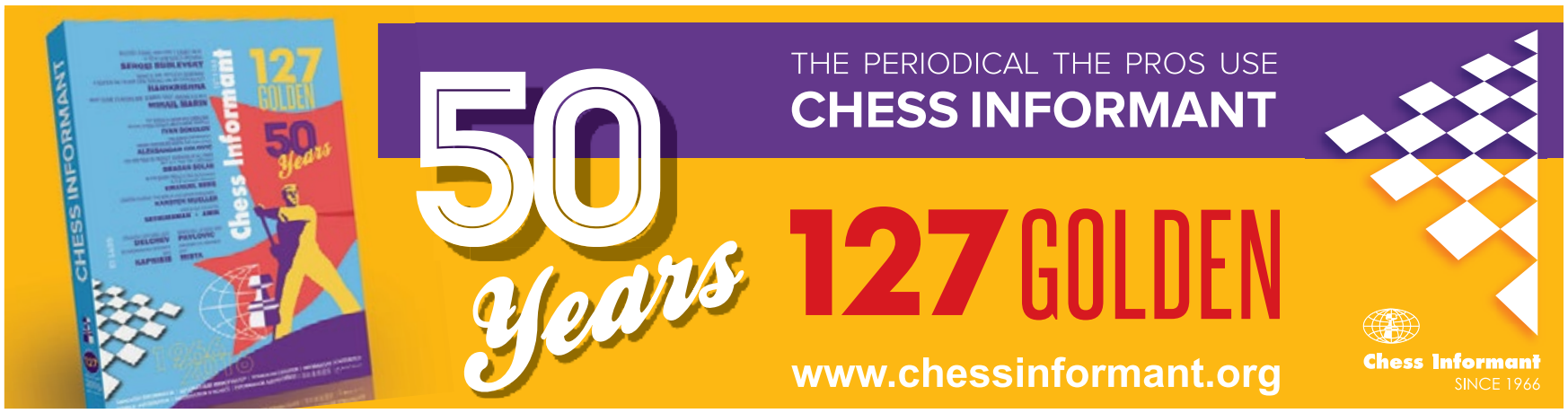
7.cxd5 The typical reaction. Now Black has a choice: to create himself a potential isolani or to try and avoid any weaknesses.

7...♘xd5



7...exd5 leads to free development, but after 8.d4 the d5-pawn will become isolated, and in the modern era the top players usually try to avoid long-term concessions like that.

8.♕c2!? An intriguing approach. White doesn't fight for the centre,



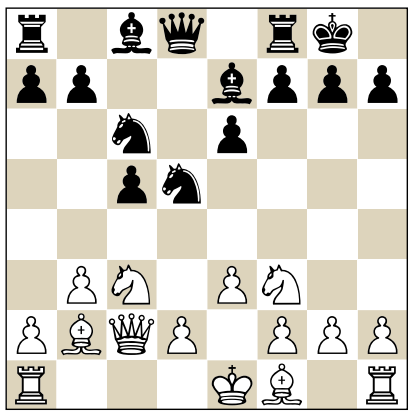
LENNART OOTES

The moment of truth. Sergey Karjakin is lost in thought only minutes before the start of the decisive game against Fabiano Caruana.

but is happy to get a dream version of a semi-Hedgehog. This aggressive set-up with all the pieces potentially facing the kingside has in fact already been played by the Russian theoreticians Lysyj and Riazantsev (note-to-self: always check games of Lysyj and Riazantsev). For some reason, Dutch Maestro Loek van Wely also played this as White once, but this should not scare you away; it was before Van Wely had acquired his famous taste for bad lines; a really long time ago.

When I had a look at this system, I was thinking about the direct approach with 8.♘xd5, but here, after 8...exd5 9.d4 ♕a5+!? 10.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 11.♔xd2 b6, there is very little White can claim to have achieved.

8...♘c6

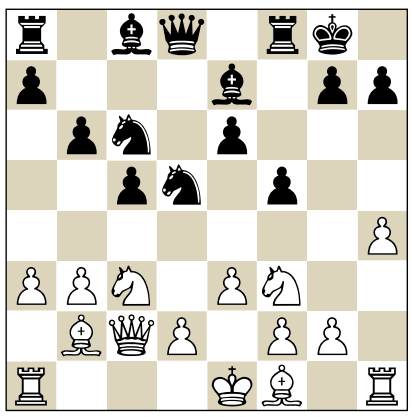


9.h4!? Such brutal moves are always nice to see! Mating the black king won't be easy, but this is not such a big concession. Indeed, Sergey simply shifted gears later and castled kingside.

9.a3!? was played before, and this looks like a pretty flexible move order.

9...b6 9...f5!? at once would also have been possible. Here it can get messy after, for example, 10.a3 ♗d7 11.g4!?.

10.a3 f5

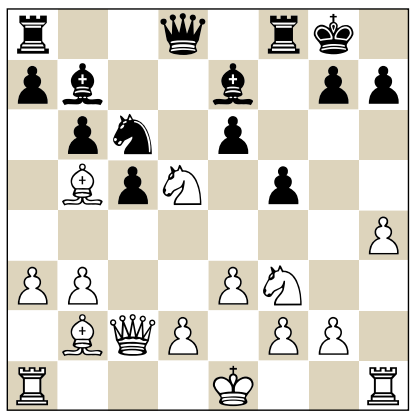


This move didn't appear natural to me, which doesn't suggest that it is bad, but rather that I still have a long way to go.

11.♗b5

11.♘xd5 was natural, and after the game Sergey suggested it was better: 11...exd5 12.d4, when Black has a shaky pawn centre, and both White's h4-pawn and Black's f5-pawn are somewhat odd. White's position may be preferred, but the game is only just starting. Black might continue 12...♕d6!?.

11...♗b7 11...♗d7!? was a serious alternative. **12.♘xd5**



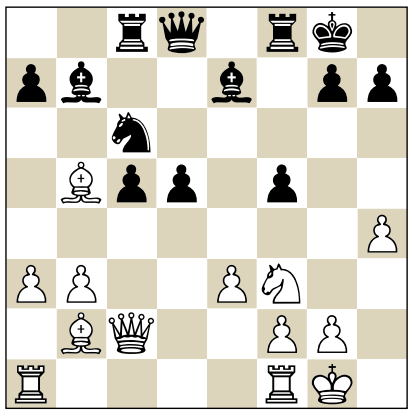
12...exd5

12...♕xd5!? was strategically less committal, but it gets funky after 13.♗c4 ♕d7 14.b4 cxb4 15.♕b3, although there is no reason to panic: 15...♘d8! 16.axb4 b5 17.♗e2 ♗d5, with a good position for Black.

13.d4

Once again, the position would have been reasonably standard, but the h4- and f5-pawns are rather confusing.

13...♖c8 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.0-0



15...♗f6

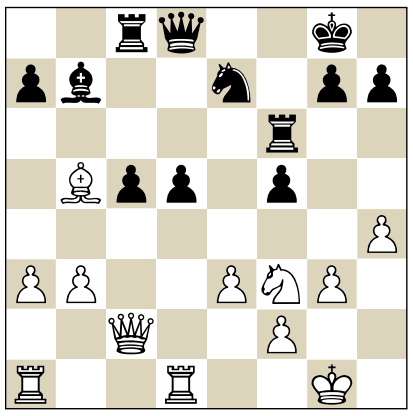
15...d4 is maybe somewhat premature, as after 16.♕e2 ♔h8 17.♖fd1 ♗f6 18.♖ac1 the central pawns turn out to be rather vulnerable after all.

16.♖fd1 ♘e7 17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 18.g3?!

This seems rather weakening, but I guess Sergey had a ♗f1-g2 regrouping in mind.

18.♗e2! would have kept the kingside more solid. Here White's posi-

tion is to be preferred. Curiously enough, Sergey's inaccuracy caused a breakdown on the part of his eminent opponent.



18...♗a6?

A huge positional blunder. A blackout for the Indian legend, which will cost him dearly. Black had been doing OK so far, and right now his main asset was the powerful bishop on the long diagonal, with the constant threat of ...d5-d4 surely worrying Sergey a lot. With this essential counterplay element disappearing, Black's position suddenly becomes very sad.

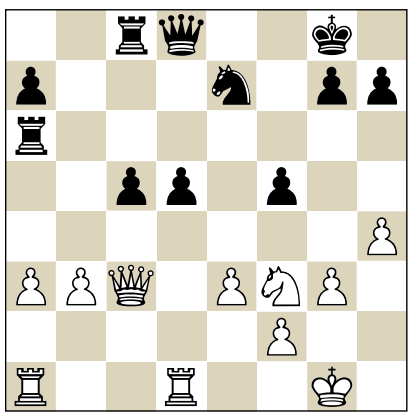
18...d4 was premature here, but Black had a wide choice of options.

For instance, 18...♔h8 was a decent option: 19.♗f1 (19.♗e2 ♕e8!?) 19...d4 20.♗g2 ♗e4 21.♕b2 ♘c6, with an excellent position: 22.exd4 ♗xf3!.

18...♘g6!? is also a reasonable way of regrouping. Black will follow up with ... ♕e7, and as usual ...d5-d4 is always on the menu.

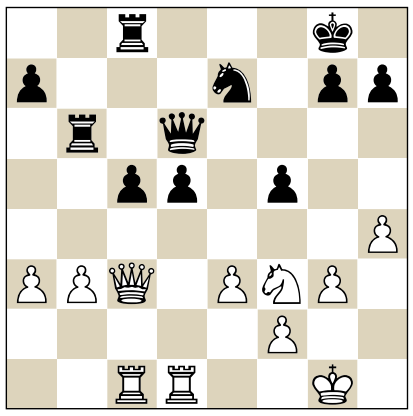
18...♕b6!? can't be bad either. Once again ...d5-d4 is to follow.

19.♗xa6 ♖xa6 20.♕c3



A nice multi-purpose move. Now White's position becomes a pleasure to play and Sergey proves himself to be a classy guy.

20...♖b6 21.♖ac1 ♕d6



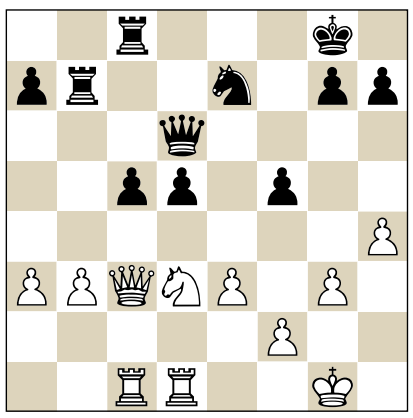
22.♘e5! Regrouping the knight and setting up some cheapos on the way. Cheapos are Sergey's favourites. Our sneaky Candidate.

22...♖b7

> 'Cheapos are Sergey's favourites. Our sneaky Candidate.'

22...♕f6 was more stubborn, but the position is very unpleasant anyway, of course.

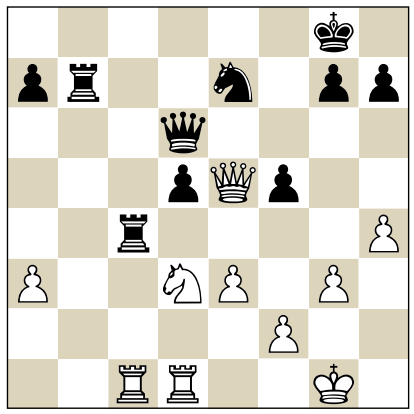
23.♘d3!



23...c4

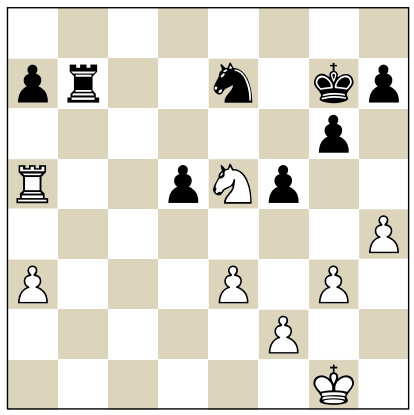
23...♖bc7 24.♘f4, and sooner or later one of the weak pawns will fall.

24.bxc4 ♖xc4 25.♕e5



Leading to a beautiful endgame for White.

25...♕xe5 26.♘xe5 ♖xc1 27.♖xc1 g6 28.♖c5! ♔g7 29.♖a5

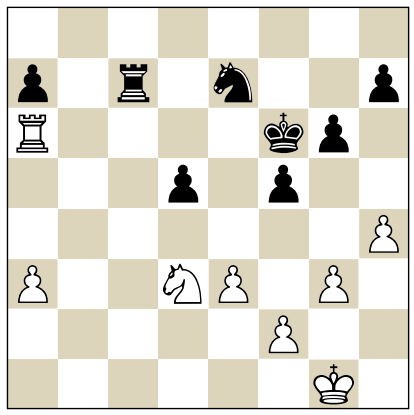


Black's position is incredibly hard to defend. And it's objectively quite bad, too.

29...♔f6 30.♘d3

Black can't untangle here. His best bet is probably to give up the d5-pawn, but then again, that seems quite hopeless too.

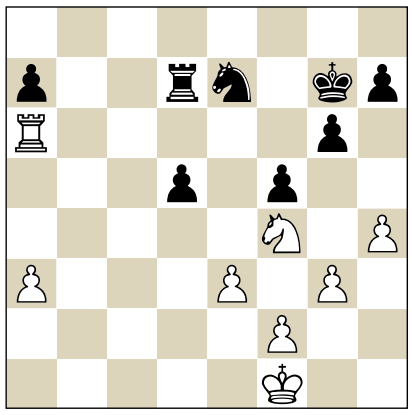
30...♖c7 31.♖a6+



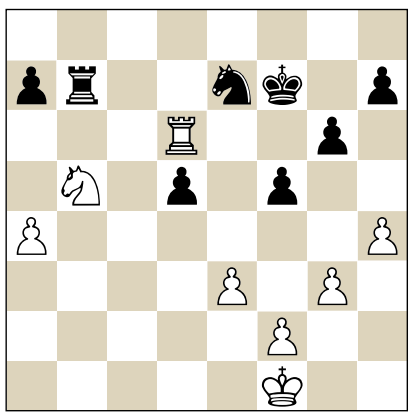
The king has to go back in. A sad, sad story.

31...♔g7 32.♘f4! ♖d7 33.♔f1

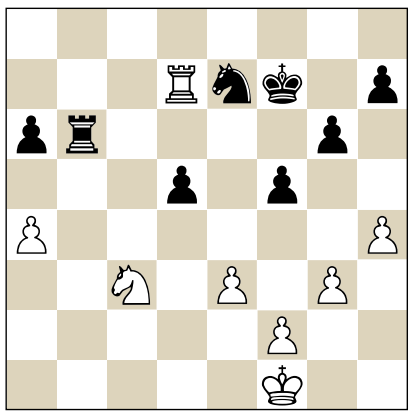
White can do anything he wants. 33.h5! looked nice too.



33...♘g8?!
33...♘c8! was the correct way to regroup, but the position is still a disaster.
34.♘e6+ ♔f7 35.♘d4!? ♘e7 36.♘b5 ♘c8 37.a4 ♖b7 38.♖c6 ♘e7 39.♖a6 ♘c8 40.♖c6 ♘e7 41.♖d6



41...♖b6?!
The final mistake. The position was far too bad, but it was still possible to drag it out somewhat.
42.♖d7 a6 43.♘c3!

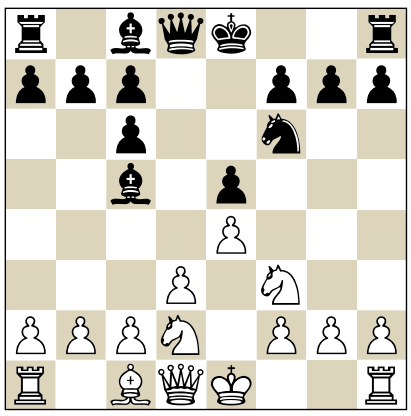


And suddenly the pawn endgame is inevitably lost. Black resigned.
An important victory for Sergey. The guy couldn't stop smiling for an hour!

NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

RL 7.1 – C65
Fabiano Caruana
Hikaru Nakamura
Moscow 2016 (8)

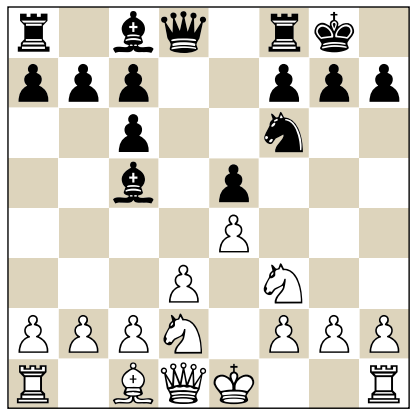
This was the first game of the second half of the tournament. I had made seven consecutive draws and felt I needed to make a move in the tournament if I wanted to have any hope of winning it.
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.♘bd2



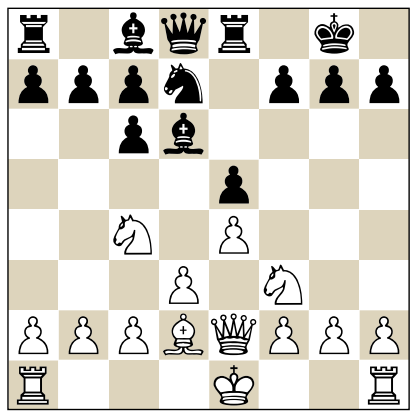
I've been toying with this move a lot recently. I even played it against Nakamura in London a few months earlier.

> 'I had made seven consecutive draws and felt I needed to make a move in the tournament if I wanted to have any hope of winning it.'

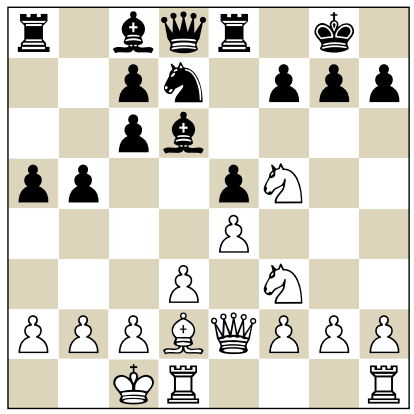
6...0-0 6...♕e7 was Nakamura's choice in London.



7.♕e2
This prepares queenside castling and is one reason for the resurgence of interest in this system.
7...♖e8 8.♘c4 ♘d7 9.♗d2 ♗d6
Preparing ...♘f8. Previously Nakamura had tried 9...f6, with the same idea, leaving the bishop more actively placed on c5, but opening up Black's kingside to an attack with g4-g5.



10.0-0-0
Surprisingly, a 'new' move. I played 10.h4 against Karjakin in Wijk aan Zee, achieving little to no edge, while Vishy played the direct 10.g4 (which can often transpose to positions from this game).
10...b5 11.♘e3 a5 12.♘f5



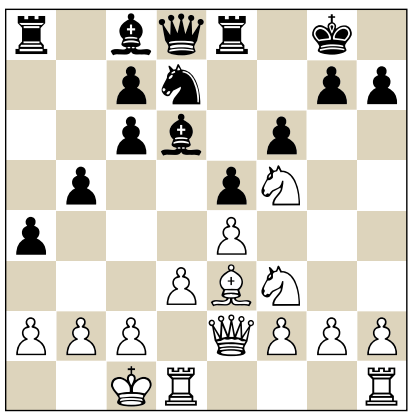
Fabiano Caruana accepted his second place with a philosophical attitude: 'Life is very long. I will have more chances in the future.'

Now it becomes clear that both sides are playing for the attack, and the only question is who will be first. We checked this position and positions similar to it the night before and decided that White has many defensive resources against Black's counterattack.

12...a4 This gives me an interesting option which Black could have avoided with, for example, 12...♘f8 13.g4 b4 14.h4 a4 was the sort of stuff I expected to happen. Now I could continue pushing my pawns, or play prophylactically with 15.♔b1.

13.♗g5!? 13.g4 might have transposed to previous lines, but I remembered that ♗g5 to provoke ...f6 was mentioned as an interesting idea in some positions, so I decided to mix it up a bit.

13...f6 14.♗e3

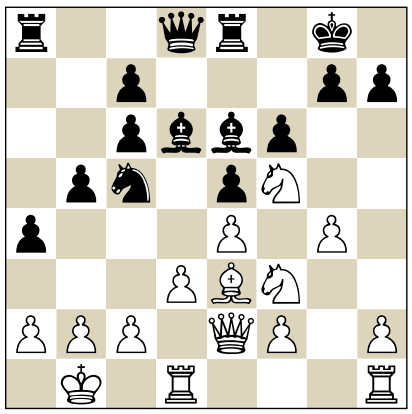


Now f6 is a target. My attack with g4 and g5 will come quickly.

14...♘c5 15.g4 ♗e6

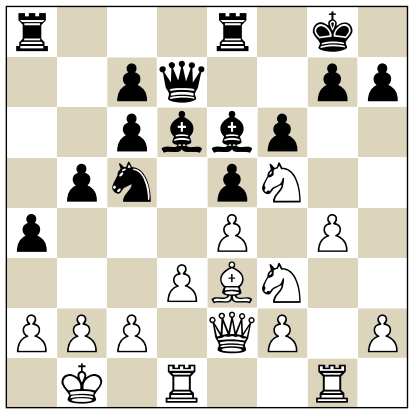
After 15...b4 16.♖hg1 b3 White plays 17.♔b1!, with similar ideas to the game: 17...bxa2+ 18.♔a1, and the king is perfectly safe behind Black's pawns.

16.♔b1



16...b4? This very natural move is, surprisingly, an error causing serious difficulties for Black.

16...♕d7! was my main concern during the game, and the best move in the position. Black prepares the simple ...♕f7 to attack a2: 17.♖hg1, and now:



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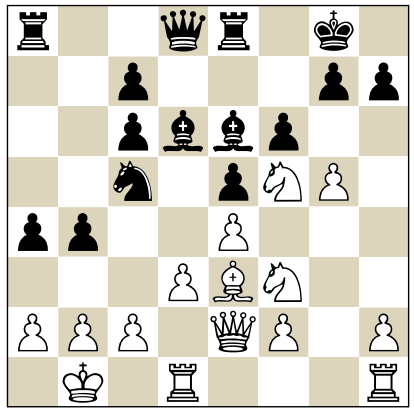
– 17...♕f7 18.g5 (18.a3 b4 is going to be scary; 18.♗xc5 ♗xc5 19.g5 ♔h8! 20.gxf6 g6 is similarly unclear) 18...♗xf5 (18...♗xa2+? 19.♔a1 leads nowhere) 19.exf5 a3 20.b3 e4 21.g6 hxg6 22.fxg6 ♕d5, with a complete mess of a game.

– After 17...♗f7 18.g5 ♕e6 19.b3 (19.a3!? looks bizarre, but White's king will run away via d2, and the a3-pawn stops any potential ...♗b4 checks) 19...axb3 (19...♗g6 wasn't considered by either of us, but after 20.♘3h4 it's still not clear how Black's attack develops) 20.cxb3 ♘xb3 21.gxf6! is winning for White, as was mentioned by Nakamura after the game.

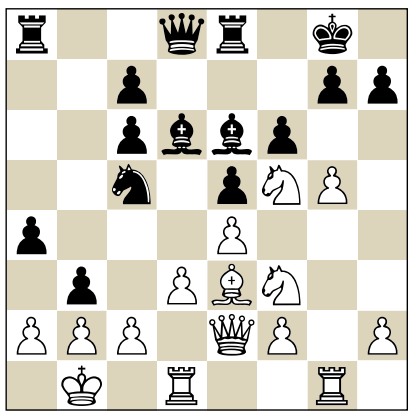
17.g5



17...b3?! Again the most natural move, and again not the best one. 17...a3 18.b3 ♗xf5 19.exf5 e4 is a slightly worse version for Black than in the previous note, but still complicated enough that he had to give it a try: 20.dxe4 (20.♘d4 fxg5 21.h4 g4 22.♕xg4 ♕f6 or 20.d4 exf3 21.♕c4+ ♘e6 22.fxe6 ♕e7 are not at all bad for Black) 20...♘xe4 21.♕c4+ ♔h8 22.♗d4, and now a move that I think few people would be able to have seen in advance: 22...♖a5! 23.gxf6 gxf6

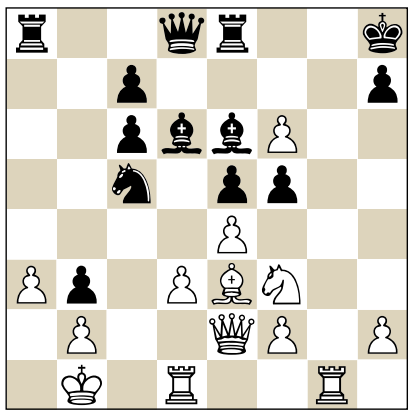
24.h4 ♖d5 25.♘g5 ♘xg5 26.hxg5 ♗e5, and it all works out for Black.

18.♖hg1! This may be the move which Nakamura had overlooked. The funny thing is that Black's attack lacks real punch, because ...bxa2+ and ...bxc2+ both don't open a route to the king. Meanwhile, I've nearly broken through on the kingside.



18...bxa2+

This came as a slight surprise. I had expected 18...g6, and here White has countless attractive options but nothing absolutely clear-cut. Maybe best is 19.cxb3 axb3 20.a3 ♘a4 (after 20...gxf5 21.gxf6+ ♔h8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

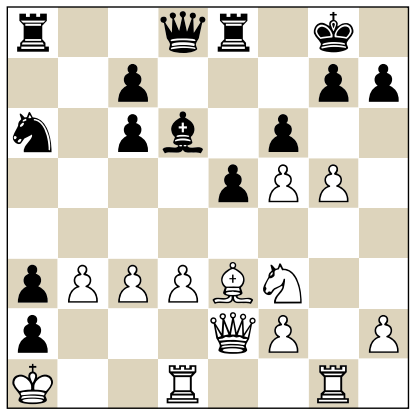
22.f7! ♗xf7 23.♗g5 ♗e7 24.♘xe5 ♖f8 25.♘xc6 is a pretty finish) 21.gxf6 ♕xf6 22.♗g5 ♕f8 23.♗h6 ♕f7 24.♘xd6 cxd6 25.♖c1, and White's king will be much safer than Black's in the long run.

19.♔a1 Now I was extremely happy with my position.

19...♗xf5 No choice but to get rid of this knight now.

20.exf5 a3 21.b3 ♘a6 22.c3

22.♘d2?! e4! is less clear than I'd have liked.

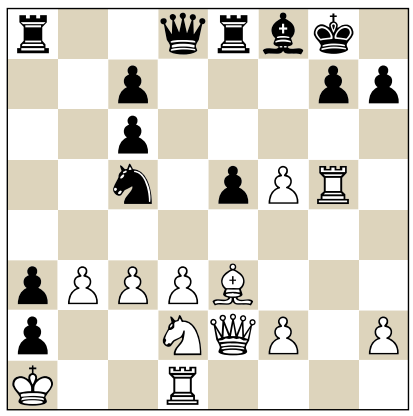


22...♗f8 After 22...♘c5, 23.♗xc5 ♗xc5 24.d4 exd4 25.♕c4+ ♕d5 26.gxf6 is crushing.

23.♘d2 The knight comes to the dominating e4-square.

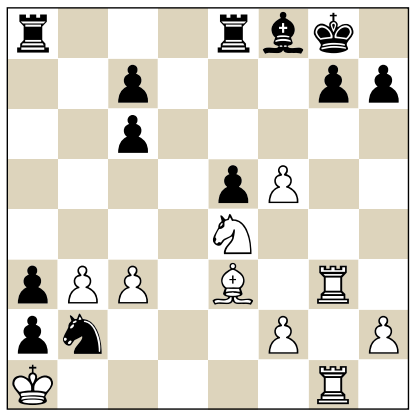
23...fxg5 24.♖xg5 I had to have seen my next move when playing this one.

24...♘c5



25.♖g3! A really nice move, ending all Black's hopes.

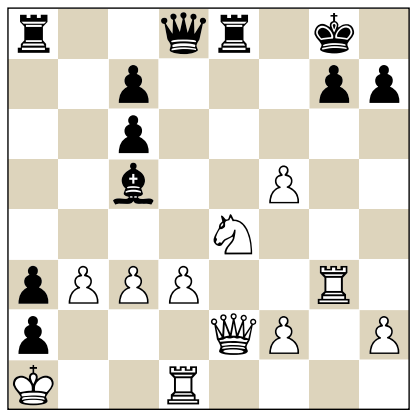
25...e4 Capitulating, but it was too late for Black to salvage the position. 25...♕xd3 26.♕xd3 ♘xd3 27.♘e4 ♘b2 (27...♖ed8 28.♗g5 shows the point behind ♖g3 – a discovered attack on the knight) 28.♖dg1



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

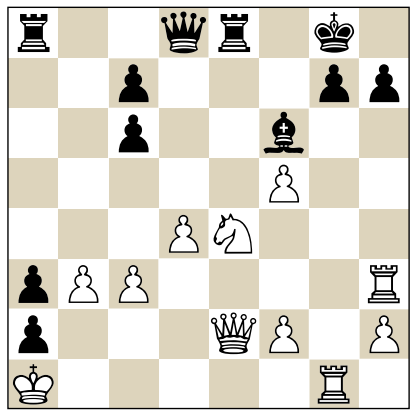
and with Black's offside knight and White's ongoing attack, the win is just a matter of time. For instance, after 28...♖ed8, 29.♗h6 breaks through. After 25...♕d5 26.♗xc5 ♗xc5 27.♖dg1 wins without allowing any counterplay.

26.♗xc5 ♗xc5 27.♘xe4



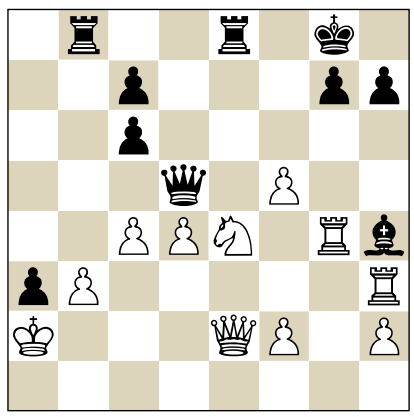
Now I'll soon be material up, with a strong attack and no counterplay to speak of for Black.

27...♗d6 28.♖h3 ♗e5 29.d4 ♗f6 30.♖g1



30...♖b8 30...♗xd4 was the last crucial thing to calculate: 31.♖d3 ♗xc3+ 32.♖xc3 ♕d4 33.♕c4+ ♕xc4 34.♖xc4, winning.

31.♔xa2 Finally capturing the doomed pawn! **31...♗h4 32.♖g4 ♕d5 33.c4**



And now I'll be up a piece too, so Nakamura resigned.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

RL 18.3 – C88
Vishy Anand
Peter Svidler
Moscow 2016 (6)

There have been a lot of interesting games in the Candidates', and my family and I enjoyed some downtime just watching and discussing them. The fun of being a spectator almost made it worth not being there myself (I said *almost*). It has been a really exciting tournament.

A big thanks to all the players involved for their fighting spirit! Anish Giri for example, although all his games were draws, was very clearly pushing hard in every single game. Too bad that some chances slipped away, as in Rounds 9 and 11, in both of which he was clearly winning. Life. These days, at the top level, players are so strong that it is inevitable that most chess games will end in draws. Getting a simple 'win' is just not that simple anymore. I match computer engines from time to time and I noticed that even with engines, 95 per cent of their games end up undecided. My point is that a perfectly played chess game (by both players) will most likely end in a draw, and I have no problem with that, as long as it was well fought and players gave it their 'all'.

Now let's talk about Vishy. Don't you think he has been one of the most exciting players in the tournament? He showed good opening preparation, good endgame technique and great stamina (which, honestly, many people even younger than him can't match). All that, plus natural talent and tons of experience, make him a dangerous opponent. What impresses me most is his ability to bounce right back from a nasty setback. After his unexpected performance in Gibraltar (which, incidentally, removed him from the Top 10 for a time) there were some doubts that he would come on strong in the Candidates'.

Those doubts were quickly erased in Round 1, when he won against Topalov. But before the following game from Round 6, Vishy was at 50%, so one cannot emphasize enough the importance of this game in terms of the final standings. Round 6 was also played before the rest day, so we can be sure that both players came to the game very determined.

> 'Vishy showed good opening preparation, good endgame technique and great stamina.'

1.e4 This is clearly Vishy's favourite first move. He plays the English from time to time, but 1.e4 is the move he scores the best with, so why not use it? Bobby Fischer's 'best by test' still holds true.

1...e5

No Sicilian today! But is that really a surprise? Due to the emergence of strong chess engines, many lines of the Sicilian have been labelled 'risky'.

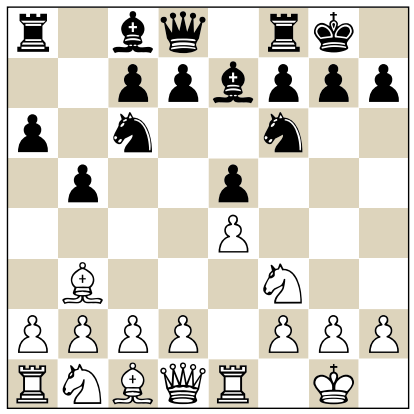
2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

The time has not yet come for Vishy to unleash 3.♗c4. Wait till Round 9, when he did so against Aronian.

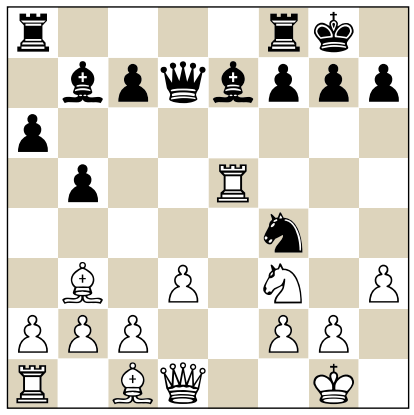
3...a6

The Berlin with 3...♘f6 has admittedly become more fashionable than 3...a6, but it also came under heavy fire in this tournament. Now the main move seems to be 4.d3.

4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 Aiming for the Marshall Attack. Fan favourite Peter Svidler is not only known for his interesting commentary, but also for his world-class opening preparation. In 2015 alone he played this line with Black several times, and his wins with it include games against Karjakin, Ivanchuk, Wei Yi, Sutovsky and probably many more I don't know about. The only worry is that you can bet Vishy had seen all those games and checked them thoroughly.



8.a4 8.h3 has gone out of fashion ever since the game Ivanchuk-So, Tata Steel 2015: 8...♗b7 9.d3 d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘bd2 (11.♘xe5 ♘d4 is equal) 11...♕d7 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.♖xe5 ♘f4 14.♘f3



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and now 14...♘xg2! 15.♔xg2 a5 with the idea ...♖a6-g6 is deadly. See New In Chess 2015/2, p.27.

8...♗b7

I wonder if Vishy had expected this line. Evgeny Tomashevsky plays it regularly, which could lead one to the conclusion that the Russian Champion and Peter have worked together. A brief history of this line: 8...♗b7 was first played in a simul (against Alekhine) back in 1930. Later it was taken up by Karpov, Geller

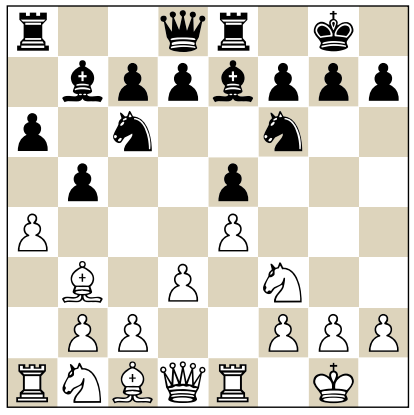
and Kholmov. Starting in the 90s, Adams decided to follow suit, confidently defending it (successfully) against many strong players. It is quite an important variation, as 8.a4 seems to be the best way to handle the Marshall right now. Later in the tournament, Peter deviated with 8...b4 and the game continued 9.d3 h6!? 10.♘bd2 d6 11.c3 ♖b8 12.h3 (12.a5!?) 12...♖e8 (might I suggest 12...♘a5 as an improvement? Doesn't the knight look well-placed here?: 13.♗a2 c5 14.♘c4) 13.d4 ♗f8 14.a5!, and White was slightly better in Topalov-Svidler, which ended in a draw after 47 moves.

9.d3

This is the regular answer to ...♗b7. Now the pawn on e4 is shored up and the idea is that the bishop on b7 might be out of play.

9...♖e8

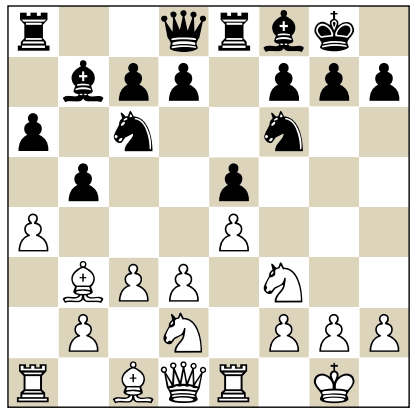
9...d5 is what Marshall players would love to play, but in this specific position I think it is still premature.



10.♘bd2

10.♘c3 is another way to develop the queenside pieces, but practice has shown that 10...♘d4 can disrupt White's plans: 11.axb5 ♘xb3 12.cxb3 axb5 13.♖xa8 ♗xa8 14.♘xb5 d5 15.exd5 ♗b4 16.♗d2 ♗xd2 17.♕xd2 ♗xd5 18.♘xe5. All this was played in Dominguez-Carlsen, Berlin World Rapid Championship 2015. Now Carlsen unleashed 18...♗xg2!, which led to quick simplification and a peaceful result.

10...♗f8 11.c3



11...♘a5

11...d5 should again be checked, as it looks very natural: 12.exd5 ♘xd5. Now White should act fast before Black consolidates his position. Perhaps 13.♘g5!? deserves attention.

11...h6 looks good to me.

12.♗c2

White protects his centre in advance, and prepares d4 next. 12.♗a2 looks logical, too, but after 12...c5 White might be concerned about an eventual ...c4.

12...c5 13.d4!

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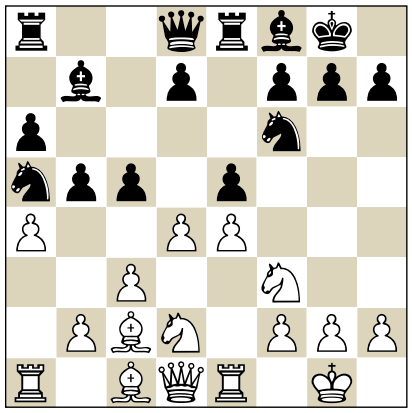


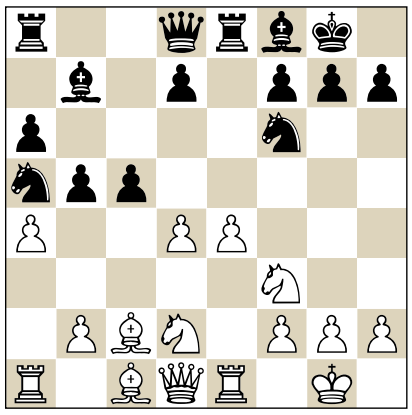
13...exd4

Is it possible that Peter mixed up his analysis around here? 13...cxd4 14.cxd4, and now:

A) 14...d5 has been played before. Perhaps this is what Peter's analysis was based on? 15.dxe5 ♘xe4 16.♕e2 ♖c8, Bruzon-Kaidanov 2012, and a draw in 22 moves.

B) 14...♕b6 is what the computer recommends. The point is that Black keeps a firm blockade on e5: 15.d5 (15.dxe5 ♘g4 16.♖f1 ♗c5 17.♕e2 ♖ac8) 15...♗c5 16.♖f1, and here there are many moves to choose from, e.g. 16...♖ac8, 16...b4, or 16...♘g4.

14.cxd4



14...d5?

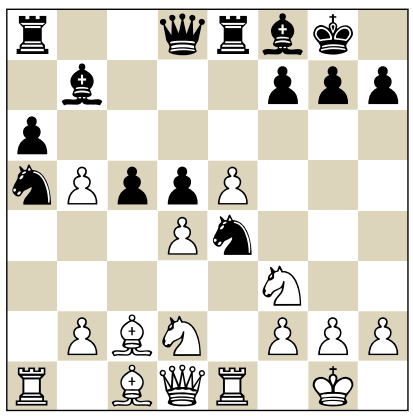
14...c4 might be of interest. If Black can get his queenside rolling, he will have counterplay, but it does look risky. White's bishops and knights are ready to swing to the kingside in a heartbeat. Later, after checking it with an engine, I realized that White wins after 15.e5, but the lines are quite complicated and I don't want to bore you, so I will only insist on it for people who want to go the 'extra mile': 15...♘d5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♘e4 ♔g8 (18...f6 19.♘fg5+ fxg5 20.♕h5+ ♔g8 21.♘xg5 ♕xg5 22.♗xg5 shouldn't be too hard for White either) 19.♘fg5 ♕b6 20.e6! ♖xe6 21.♕h5 ♖h6 22.♕xf7+ ♔h8 23.♕xd7, followed by ♘f7+.

Definitely the best move was 14...cxd4!, but thinking about this position in a playing hall, during the stress of a live match, is quite different from watching the game in the comfort of your home with the (occasional) glance at a computer. Besides, after 15.e5 ♘d5 it does look quite dangerous for Black, with most of White's pieces aimed at his king.

15.e5 ♘e4

15...♘d7 16.♘f1, with a clear advantage for White.

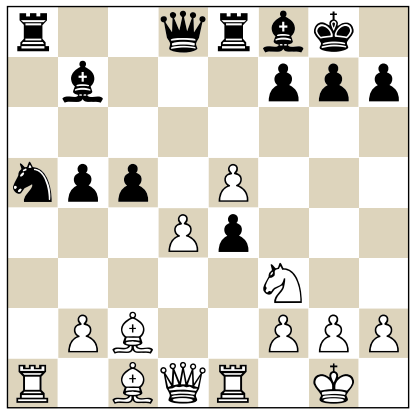
16.axb5!



16...axb5

16...♘xd2 17.♗xd2 axb5 does not work due to many reasons, the simplest being the bishop sacrifice on h7.

17.♘xe4 dxe4



18.♖xe4! Remember the rule: do not trade your best pieces! In this case, White's bishops are clearly his trump cards. Black has many light-square weaknesses (b5, h7, and even f7 are all vulnerable), so it just seems right to make the exchange sacrifice. 18.♗xe4 ♗xe4 19.♖xe4 ♕d5, followed by ...c4 or ...♘b3, will give Black plenty of play for the pawn.

18...♘b3?

The decisive mistake. Now Black will no longer be able to save the game.

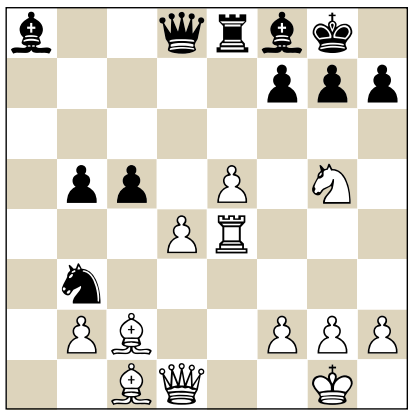
NEW IN CHESS

Few some him as one of the favourites, but once again Vishy Anand was fighting for first place. 'It could have been an even better tournament, but of course I can't complain.'

If 18...♗xe4 then 19.♗xe4, and this is one of the relatively rare cases where a bishop (on e4) is stronger than a rook! After 19...♖a6 (19...♖a7 20.♗xh7+!, followed by a knight jump to g5) 20.♕d3 Black can't help losing more pawns and is in deep trouble.

Objectively, 18...g6 would be Black's best bet, when he is 'only' a pawn down.

19.♖xa8 ♗xa8 19...♕xa8 20.♖h4 is also easy enough. **20.♘g5!**



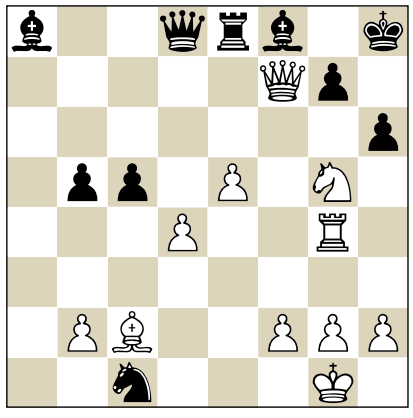
The squares f7 and, in particular, h7 are too vulnerable.

20...♘xc1 After 20...♗e7, 21.♘xf7 wins.

21.♕h5 h6

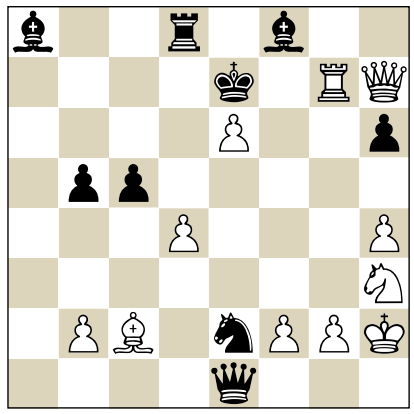
21...♕xg5 is a little more stubborn, although a fortress is not achievable after 22.♕xg5 ♗xe4 23.♕xc1 ♗xc2 24.♕xc2 cxd4 25.f4 ♖d8 26.♕d3.

22.♕xf7+ ♔h8 23.♖g4



23...♕a5 No better is 23...♘e2+ 24.♔f1 ♘xd4 25.♕g6.

24.h4! Not only safeguarding the back rank, but also freeing up h3 for the knight. Peter resigned here, as there is no defence, e.g. 24...♕e1+ 25.♔h2 ♘e2 26.♘h3 ♖d8 27.♕f5 ♔g8 28.♕h7+ ♔f7 29.e6+! ♔e7 (29...♔xe6 30.♕f5+) 30.♖xg7+, and Black's king will not survive the onslaught:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30...♗xg7 31.♕xg7+ ♔xe6 32.♕e5+ ♔d7 33.dxc5 – Black can run, but he cannot hide. For the white queen and bishop this is happy hunting: 33...♕d2 34.♗f5+ ♔c6 35.♗e4+ ♔d7 36.c6+ ♗xc6 37.♗f5, checkmate.

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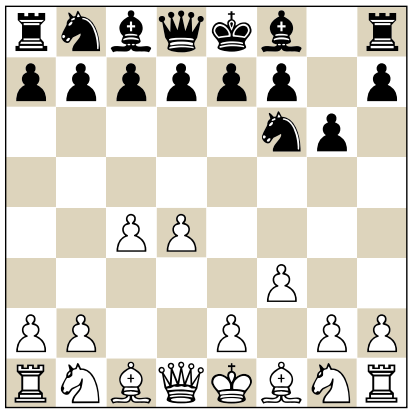
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

GI 1.1 – D70
Anish Giri
Fabiano Caruana
Moscow 2016 (9)

I had already missed a couple of chances in the tournament, and by Round 9 it had become clear that I had cornered myself into a must-win situation. After some serious mental preparation, including the latest Kung Fu Panda movie, I was ready for it.

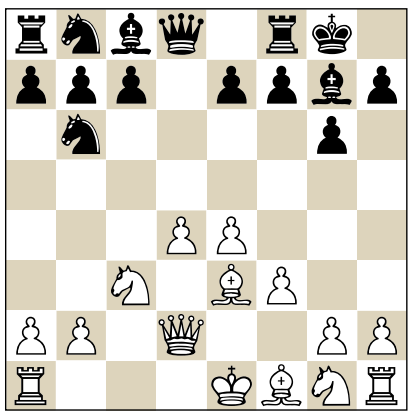
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3



Fabiano was going to be surrounded with sharp variations, no matter what opening he would choose, and the Grünfeld was no exception.

3...d5 Considering that Fabiano had already played the Modern Benoni in the tournament, I was expecting him to lash out with ...c5 here as well, but the Grünfeld approach was not a surprise either.

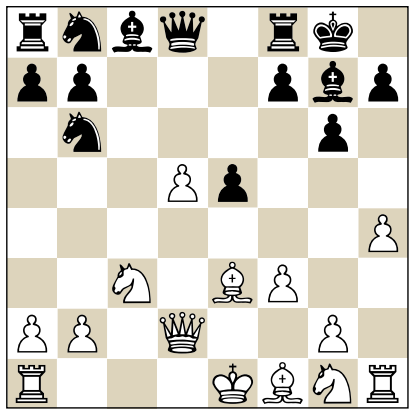
4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2



8...e5

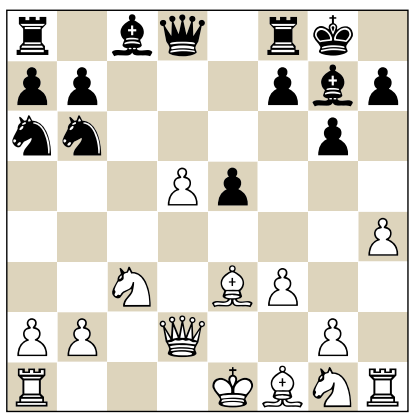
Previously Fabiano has played the ...♘c6, ...♕d6 variation, and in fact back in the days we worked together on that variation a lot. Separately. But still together. Well that's hard to explain.

9.d5 c6 10.h4 cxd5 11.exd5



11...♘a6!? This was a big surprise. The variations starting with 11...♘8d7 are in very good theoretical shape at the moment, and that was the direction we were focusing on with my team. I had the feeling I had never seen this move before, but when I came home after the game, it turned out I had sketched out some rubbish against it. Fortunately, I remembered none of it, as what I came up with over the board was much better.

> 'After some serious mental preparation, including the latest Kung Fu Panda movie, I was ready for it.'

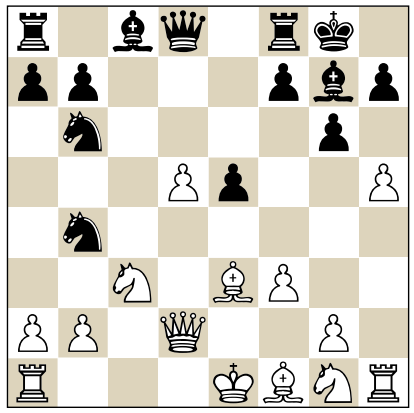


12.h5

I was also considering some cunning alternatives like 12.a3!? and 12.♖d1, but in the end I decided that nothing could be better than the straightforward approach.

12...♘b4

I saw this and 13... ♗f5! coming, but I nevertheless felt that this would be the right road to go down.

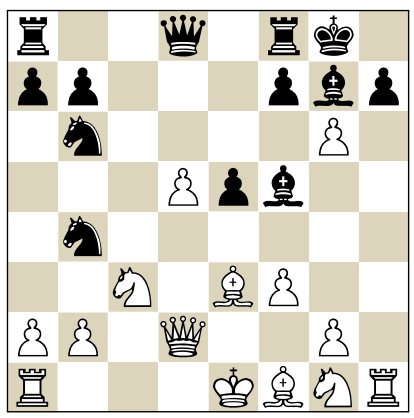


13.hxg6

13.♗c5 was my first thought, but after 13...♘4xd5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♗xf8 ♗xf8 it is obvious that Black has fine compensation.

13...♗f5!

The point of the whole line.



14.gxh7+

My first thought was that this was exactly what I should not be doing, but after a while I changed my mind, as other options seemed very unattractive. I was actually quite proud to have reached some pretty serious depth in the opening without my machine. I don't get to do that a lot, fortunately.

14.gxf7+ felt like a much juicier pawn, but then the rook comes into play: 14...♖xf7 15.♖c1 ♘4xd5 16.♘xd5

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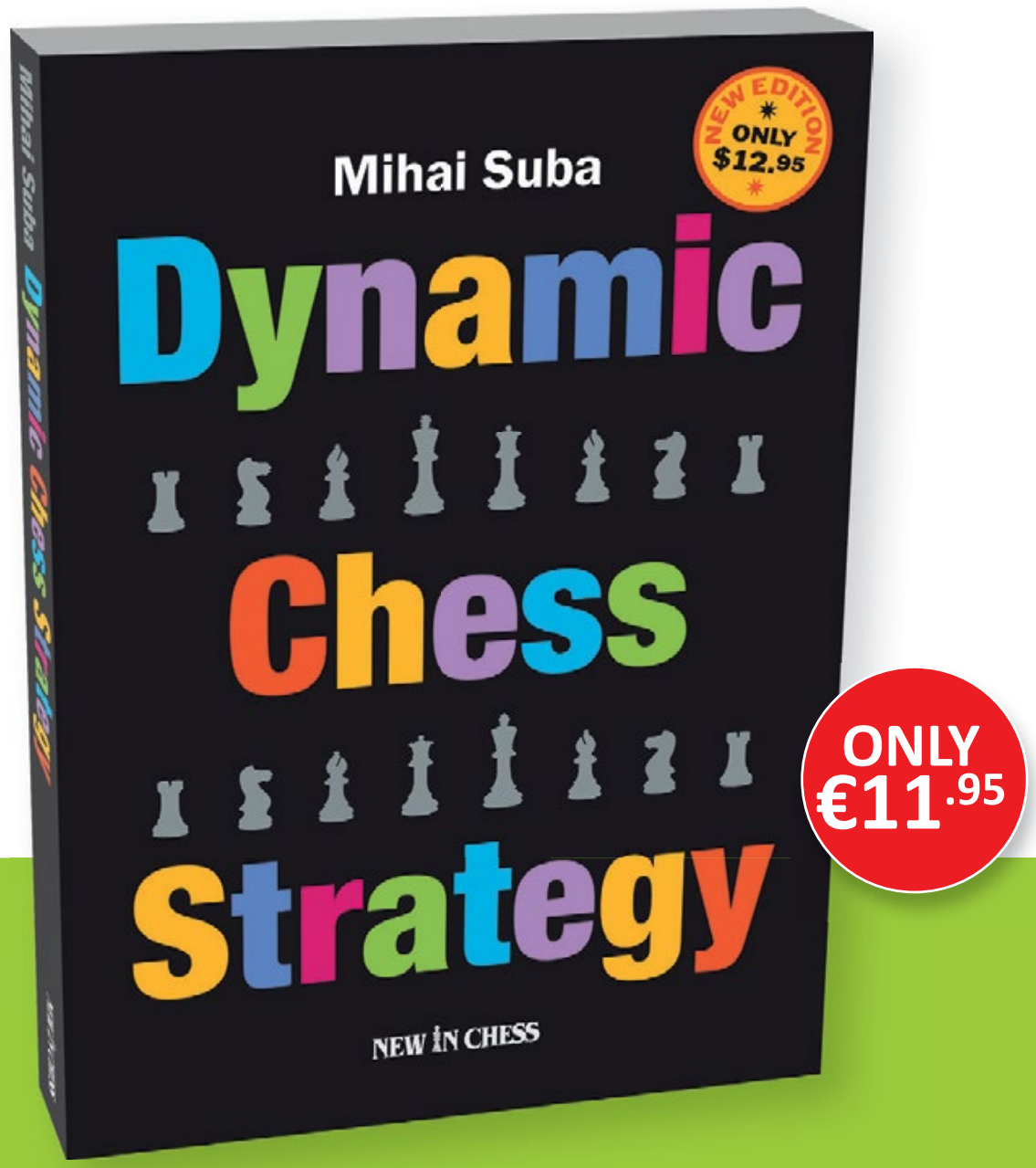

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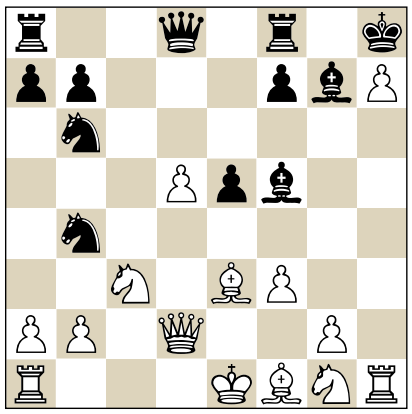
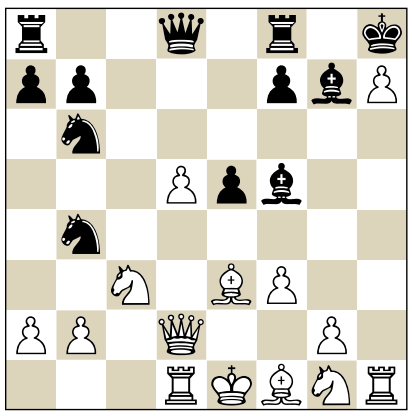
♕xd5. This looked equal, and considering my mindset before the game (remember Kung Fu Panda?) this wasn't an option.
14.♘e4 was tempting, though, as after 14...♘6xd5 15.♗c5 ♕a5 White must play 16.♖c1, when the situation on the board is chaotic, but something just doesn't feel right about White's position.

14...♔h8!

14...♗xh7 is just conceptually wrong. I am too lazy to wait for my machine to kill this move, so let me just give you a nice line that looks good for White: 15.♗h6!? ♘c2+ 16.♔f2 e4!? 17.♘xe4 ♗d4+ 18.♔g3! ♗xe4 19.fxe4 ♗e5+ 20.♔f2 ♘xa1 (20...♗d4+ 21.♔e2!) 21.♘f3, with a crushing attack for just one rook.



15.♖d1! Somehow this move didn't occur to me immediately, but once it did, I hardly hesitated.
15.♖c1 ♘6xd5 gives Black a risk-free game.

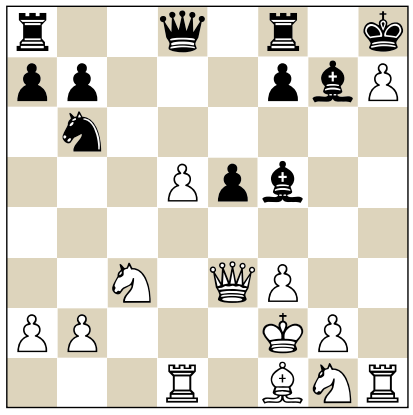


15...♘c2+

This surprised me somewhat. Black is losing momentum with this move and aims for some long-term positional compensation. Not sure.

15...♖c8 looks more flexible. Here Fabiano was surely worried about 16.♗h6!, when, in the long run, Black risks ending up with no compensation for the pawn(s). In the game he at least gets the bishop pair.

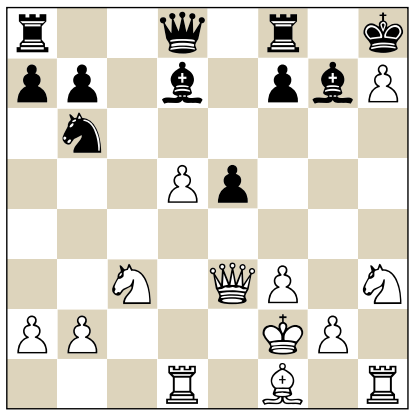
16.♔f2 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3



17...♗d7!?

I think I know where this move comes from. Fabiano had once lost a nice game (yes, in the Najdorf) against Vachier-Lagrave, in which the brilliant Frenchman had made a long-term pawn sacrifice and then surprised him with the retreat ...♗d7!, followed by ... f5.
However, here I was expecting the bishop to end up on g6, and I still believe that was the way to go for Black: 17...♖c8 18.♗e2 (18.♘h3 ♘a4! 19.♘xa4 ♕h4+) 18...♗g6!? 19.♘h3 ♘c4 20.♗xc4 ♖xc4, with decent compensation for the two pawns. Still, with the element of surprise gone, I am not sure this variation will find all that many followers.

18.♘h3



18...f5 Fabiano kept blitzing out his moves, but by this time I was no longer impressed.

Celeb 64

John Henderson

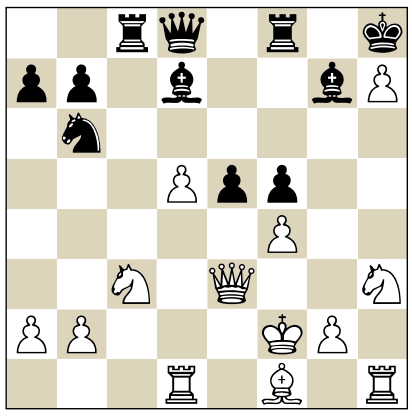
Bob Dylan

With the young Bob Dylan on the cusp of stardom, following the release in 1964 of his breakthrough album, *The Times They Are a-Changing*, many perceived the singer-songwriter to be a very keen chess player – and all because of a series of now iconic photographs of Dylan playing chess outside a café in Woodstock, New York, that was shot earlier that same year by photographer Daniel Kramer.
But Dylan's chess connection was earlier than this. In his *Gaslight '61* live recording, his monologue, *The Story of East Orange*, was all about a bad gig he once had in a chess-playing coffeehouse in New Jersey, where he was continually interrupted by those that were more interested in what was happening over their chessboards rather than listening to him singing!
And in Bob Spitz's *Dylan: A Biography*, there are also several paragraphs on chess, describing how he used to try to psyche his opponent out by talking during a game. He also was known to do the same wild, nervous leg shaking motion while playing that he does when he is singing.
Then in 2002, *The Atlantic* magazine claimed a 'chess scoop' that Dylan paid for a phone conversation (worth $2,500) with Bobby Fischer in the 1980s. Not to be outdone, Fischer's successor also got in on the act. During an interview for *Rolling Stone* in 2012, Dylan is seen pictured pondering beside an empty chessboard, and behind him there loomed a larger-than-life poster of Anatoly Karpov. ■

18...♖c8 seems more flexible. Here I would probably go 19.g3 again, when it's hard to suggest another useful move for Black. Perhaps something very deep like 19...f6!?, followed by ...♕e8-g6.

19.f4! Clarifying the situation on the kingside.

19...♖c8!?



20.g3! The strongest. I didn't want to start with ♗e2 in order to save a tempo when taking on c4, should the black knight go there. Even more shocking was to see Fabiano playing this move anyway.

Another idea was 20.fxe5 f4 21.♘xf4 ♕g5 22.g3 ♗xe5 23.♖d4!?.

20...♘c4?

Played after an incredibly long think. Black didn't have a really nice move here, but still there was no reason to go for a losing one.

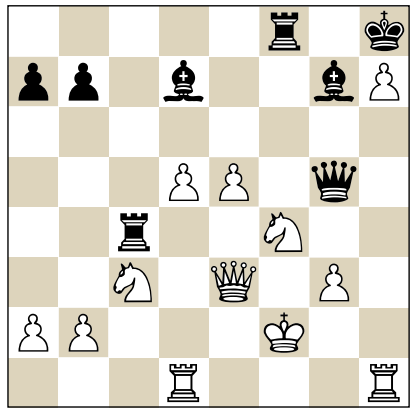
> 'I guess it was just destiny trying to save me from sabotaging my heavenly mission to end the tournament with a historical result.'

20...e4 would have been better, for what it's worth. After 21.♘g5 White has a very stable position, and it's hard to imagine that Black has enough compensation for two pawns. Still the position remains playable.

21.♗xc4 ♖xc4 22.fxe5 f4

This is a must now.

23.♘xf4 ♕g5



Perhaps still somewhat confused by how the whole thing happened, I now went nuts in my own way.

24.♖d4?

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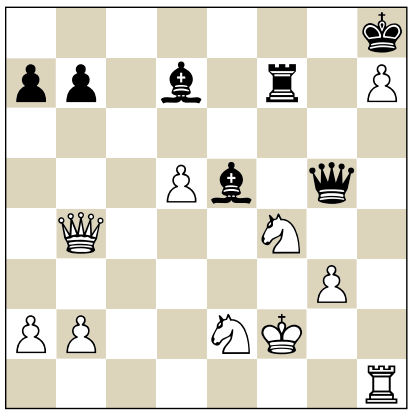
I saw that this move would lead to a close-to-winning position, but for some reason I decided not to win the game on the spot.

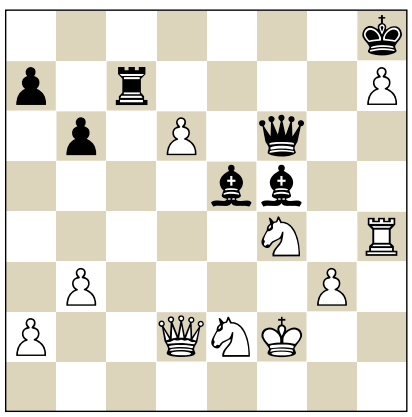
24.♔e1! had occurred to me (24...♗xe5 25.♘g6+! is the trick). Remarkably enough, I saw some ghosts here, which to this day remains a mystery to me. I guess it was just destiny trying to save me from sabotaging my heavenly mission to end the tournament with a historic result. Hopefully one day I will also get a heavenly mission to actually win a tournament for a change.

24...♖xd4 25.♕xd4 ♗xe5 26.♕b4 ♖f7 27.♘ce2



White's position is still technically winning, but if you will excuse me, I will not go into much more detail. In short, I got one more chance after the time-control, but as you must already have figured out by now, that one was blown as well.

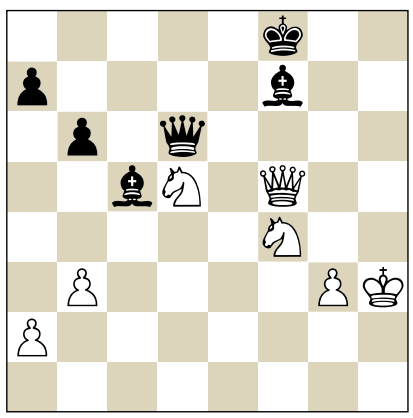
27...♗g4 28.♕e4 ♕f6 29.♖h4 ♗f5 30.♕e3 b6 31.b3 ♖e7 32.♕d2 ♖c7 33.d6



33...♗xd6

Better was 33...♕xd6!, although White remains better.

34.♕d5 ♖f7 35.♔g2 ♗c5 36.♖h5 ♗g4 37.♖h6 ♕xh6 38.♕xf7 ♕c6+ 39.♘d5 ♗e6 40.♕f6+ ♔xh7 41.♕h4+ ♔g7 42.♕g5+ ♔f8 43.♕f6+ ♔g8 44.♕g6+ ♔f8 45.♕h6+ ♔g8 46.♕g5+ ♔f8 47.♘ef4 ♗f7 48.♕e5 ♔g8 49.♔h3 ♕d6 50.♘f6+ ♔f8 51.♕f5 ♔e7 52.♘6d5+ ♔f8



53.♔g4

White could have won with 53.g4! ♔g7 (after 53...♕h6+ White wins with 54.♔g2!) 54.g5 ♗d4 55.♕e4 ♗b2 56.♘e7 ♕e5 57.♘f5+. Now the game ended in a draw after another 43 moves.

53...♗d4 54.♘c7 ♗e5 55.♘cd5 a5 56.♕c8+ ♔g7 57.♘e3 ♔h7 58.♕b7 ♔g8 59.♕a8+ ♕b8 60.♕e4 ♕d6 61.♘f5 ♕d1+ 62.♘e2 ♗g7! 63.♘xg7 ♔xg7 64.♕e5+ ♔g6 65.♔f3 ♕d3+ 66.♔f2 ♕c2 67.♕d6+ ♔g7 68.♕d4+ ♔g8 69.♕g4+ ♔f8 70.♕a4 ♗e8 71.♕a3+ ♔g8 72.♕e7 ♗f7 73.♕d8+ ♔g7 74.♕d4+ ♔g8 75.♕a4 ♕d2 76.♕g4+ ♔f8 77.♕c8+ ♔e7 78.♕c7+ ♔f8 79.a3 ♗xb3 80.♕b8+ ♔f7 81.♕b7+ ♔g8 82.♕xb6 ♕a2 83.♕d8+ ♔f7 84.♕d7+ ♔g8 85.♕e8+ ♔g7 86.♕e7+ ♗f7 87.g4 ♕d2 88.♕c5 ♗e6 89.♕e5+ ♔f7 90.g5 ♕a2 91.♕f6+ ♔e8 92.♕h8+ ♔e7 93.♕h7+ ♔f8 94.♕h8+ ♔e7 95.♕g7+ ♔e8 96.♕h8+

Draw.

NEW IN CHESS

Anish Giri earned the praise of several colleagues for his excellent play, but missing a number of golden opportunities he failed to win a game and had to settle for a unique series of 14 draws.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

EO 38.15 – A34
Peter Svidler
Fabiano Caruana
Moscow 2016 (7)

Unlike his opponent in this game, Peter Svidler never quite got a chance to win the Candidates' tournament. The experienced Russian has played an important role in many World Championship cycles, but he never quite made it far enough. In his own words, after every Candidates' tournament people come to him saying 'Well done, you were well prepared, you played well'. But there is little use in these words when you never get much above the 50 percent equilibrium. Peter clearly needs to be more ambitious and take more risk. 12 draws out of 14 games, I mean, come on, that's not a Champion's attitude there! Stop with all the draws, Uncle Pete (irony alert).

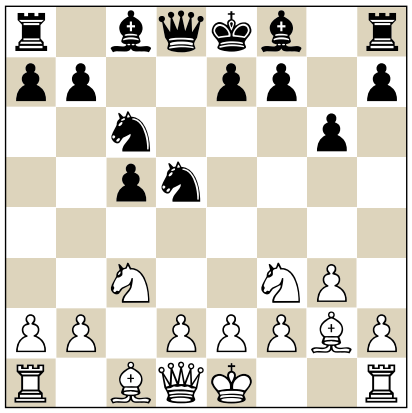
1.c4

In his first White game, Peter played 1.e4, hoping for Topalov to reply with a sharp Sicilian. When it turned out that the Russian's camp had not come up with anything revolutionary against the topical Berlin, he switched to 1.c4 for the rest of the event.

1...c5

That's what Fabi does pretty much all the time. He seems to have things worked out in the symmetrical English, yet time and again new ideas pop up there.

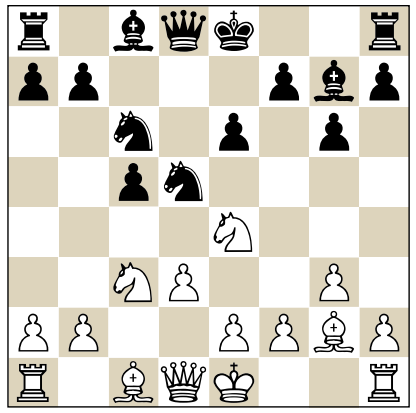
2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 g6



7.♘g5!? One of the options to prevent Black from developing peacefully. Such diversions are hard to meet, but if you know how to deal with them, they are usually as dangerous for Black as they are for White. At the end of the day, strategically speaking, Black got a space advantage.

> 'Peter clearly needs to be more ambitious and take more risk. 12 draws out of 14 games, I mean, come on, that's not a Champion's attitude there!'

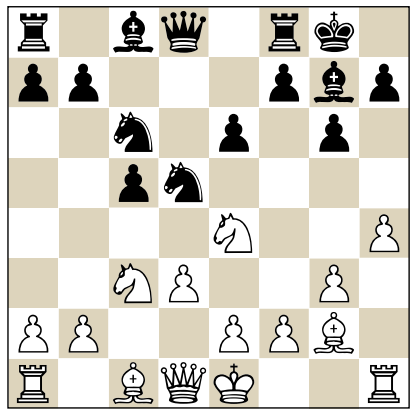
7...e6 8.d3 ♗g7 9.♘ge4



In this particular position this move appears to be a novelty, but this manoeuvre is pretty typical for this line.

9...0-0 For now, the c5-pawn doesn't seem to be hanging, so there was little reason to postpone castling kingside. Or so it seemed.

10.h4!? This seems extremely harmless at first sight, but once you realize where your prepared opponent is 'waiting' for you after the natural 10... h6, things start looking less easy.



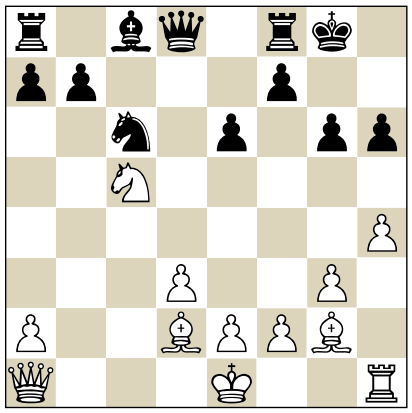
10...b6

Fabiano decides not to pay attention to the rook-pawn spurt. 10...h6 is met

Moscow 2016

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2760	* *	½ 1	1 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	8½	2854
2	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2794	½ 0	* *	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	7½	2801
3	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2762	0 1	½ 0	* *	1 ½	½ 1	½ ½	½ 0	1 ½	7½	2806
4	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2757	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	7	2781
5	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2786	½ ½	½ ½	½ 0	½ 0	* *	½ ½	1 ½	1 ½	7	2777
6	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2793	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ ½	½ ½	7	2776
7	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2790	0 ½	½ 0	½ 1	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	* *	1 1	7	2776
8	Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2780	½ 0	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	0 0	* *	4½	2648

by 11.♘xc5! ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 13.♗d2 ♗xa1 14.♕xa1,



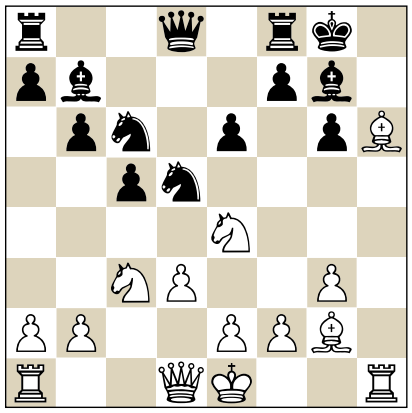
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

or at least that's what I would think Peter had prepared. Now the point of including h4/...h6 is obvious.

10...h5 is not without pitfalls either, when even 11.g4!? has a point.

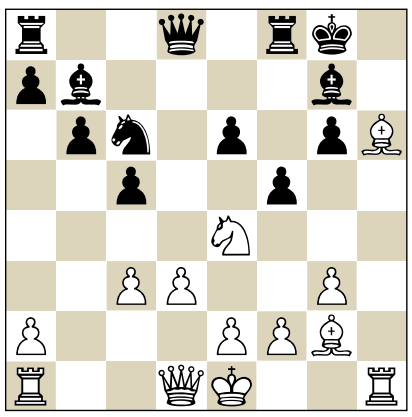
11.h5 ♗b7 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♗h6

Usually such stuff is solidly met with captures on h6, ...♔g7 and ...♖h8, but here the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal causes some serious discomfort.



13...♘xc3 After 13...♗xh6 14.♖xh6 ♔g7 15.♕d2 ♖h8 16.♖xh8 ♕xh8 17.0-0-0, with threats of ♖h1 and ♘d6, White is just completely winning.

14.bxc3 f5

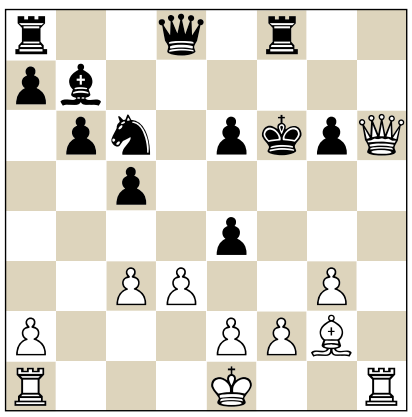


NEW IN CHESS

For Peter Svidler 'a sense of a tremendous missed opportunity' prevailed. 'I had between three and five positions you would win on a good day.'

This looks like a good way to deal with the coming threats along the h-file (♕d2 etc.), but White wastes no time.

15.♕c1! fxe4 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕h6+ ♔f6

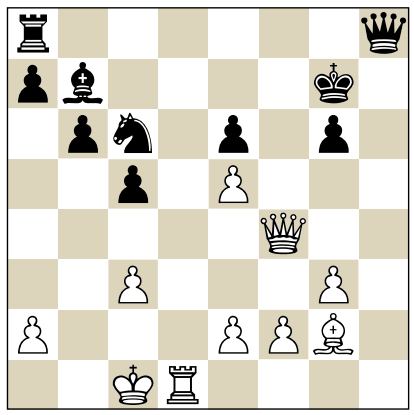


18.dxe4!

Here Black is already in trouble (surprisingly or not, depending on your attacking instincts). Needless to say, an improvement has to be found at an earlier stage, since what Fabi tried just didn't work out.

18...♖h8 19.e5+! ♔f7 20.♕f4+ ♔g7 21.♖xh8 ♕xh8 22.0-0-0!

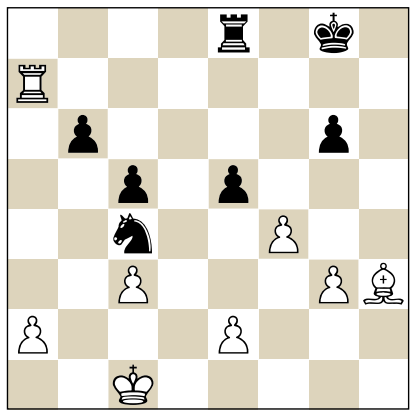
Black has to return the piece, but what to do? Fabiano continues to defend.



22...♔g8 23.♖d7 ♖f8 24.♕g4 ♕h6+ 25.f4 ♖e8 The bishop has to go. **26.♖xb7 ♘xe5 27.♕h3 ♕xh3 28.♗xh3 ♘c4 29.♖xa7**

White is a pawn up and appears to be technically winning.

29...e5



30.♗g2?

But not this way. 30.♖a4! wins here, as Black doesn't have a comfortable reply. For example, 30...♘d6 31.♖a6!.

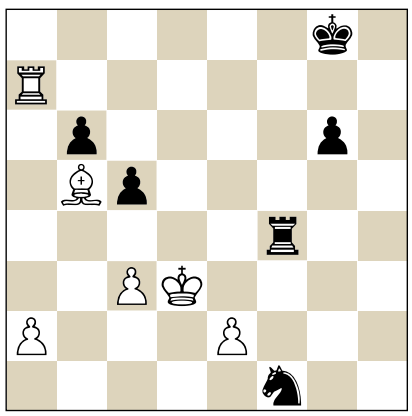
30...♘e3 31.♗c6 ♖e6 32.♗b5 exf4 33.gxf4 ♖f6?

33...♔f8! was a solid one, when White will find it extremely hard to convert his pawn: 34.♔d2 ♘g2!.

34.♔d2!

White returns the pawn, but gains a lot of tempos and harmony.

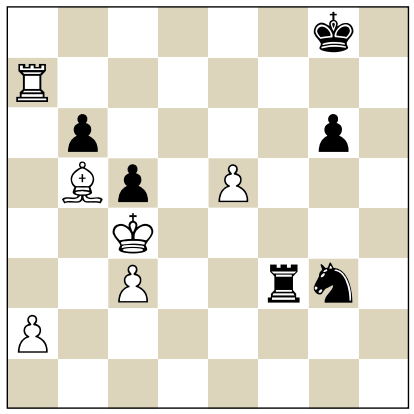
34...♘f1+ 35.♔d3 ♖xf4



36.e4?

Instead, 36.♖b7! wins. A sample line would be 36...g5 (36...♖f6, and only now 37.e4!) 37.♖xb6 ♔g7 38.♖e6! g4 39.♖e4!.

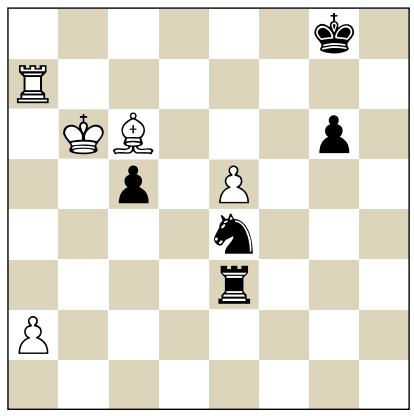
36...♘g3 37.e5 ♖f3+ 38.♔c4



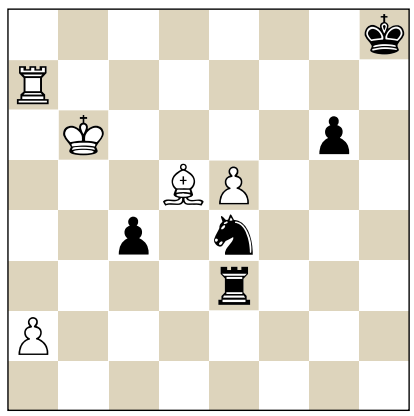
38...♘e4 38...♘e2! was a better defensive attempt, according to my chessbomb gospel.

39.♗c6 ♖xc3+ 40.♔b5 40.♔d5 was another attempt, but with some precision Black is likely to hold this as well: 40...♖e3 41.e6 ♖e1 (I would like to see the colour of Fabiano's ears when he would be thinking about this position and whether this move would be the outcome: 41...♘f6+? 42.♔d6 c4 43.♖f7!) 42.♖a8+ ♔g7 43.e7 ♘f6+ 44.♔d6 c4 45.e8♕ ♘xe8+ 46.♗xe8 ♖a1!, and apparently White will lose the a2-pawn sooner or later, as the c-pawn is a serious nuisance.

40...♖e3 41.♔xb6

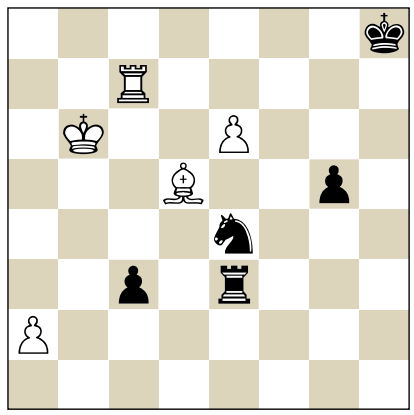


41...c4?? 41...♘c3! draws. **42.♗d5+?** 42.a4! c3 43.♗d5+ ♔h8 44.♖c7 was winning. **42...♔h8**



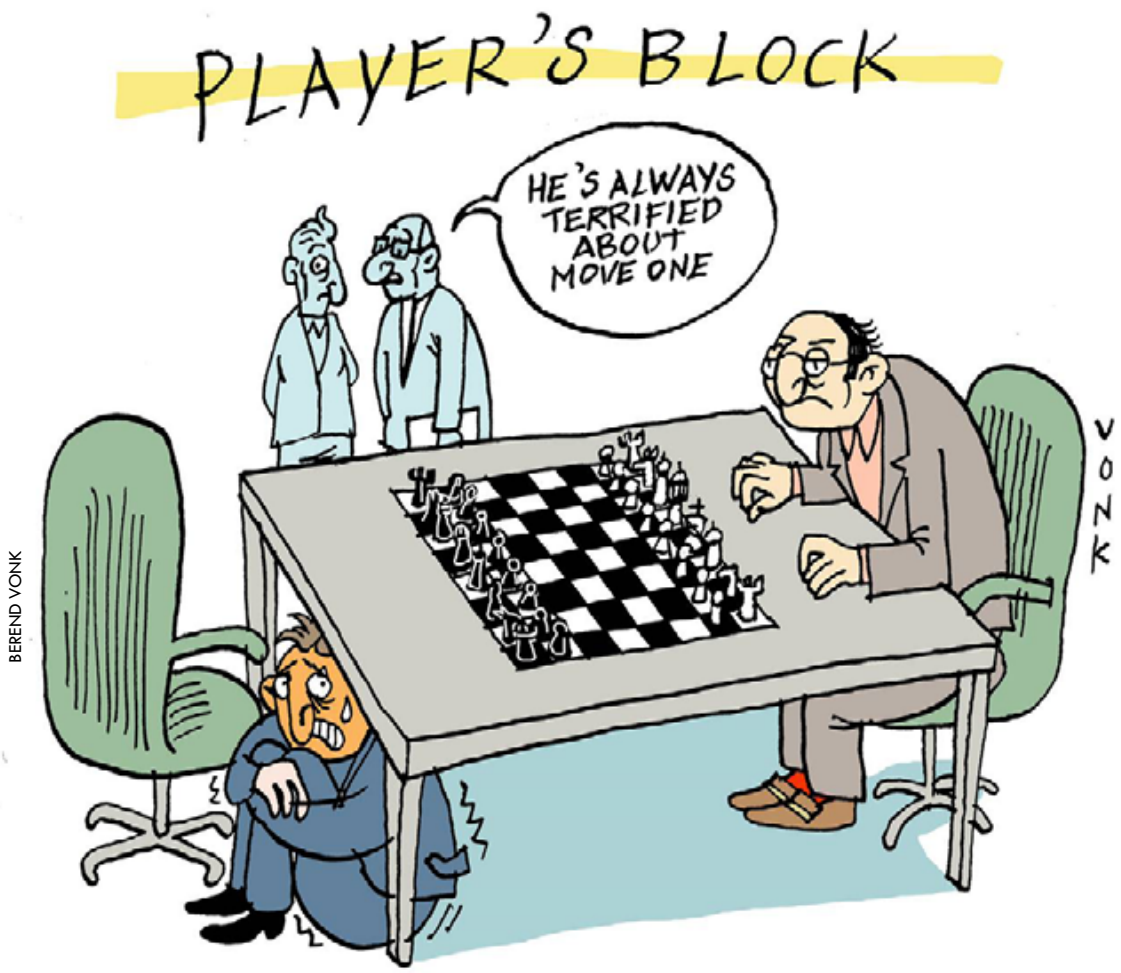
43.e6?? 43.♗xc4 was probably still winning: 43...♘d2 44.♗f7, when the a-pawn is (surprisingly or unsurprisingly, depending on your endgame instincts) a dangerous asset.

43...c3 44.♖c7 g5



And here Peter realized that ...♘f6 would be hard to meet, so a draw happened. Yay.

45.♗xe4 Draw. ■



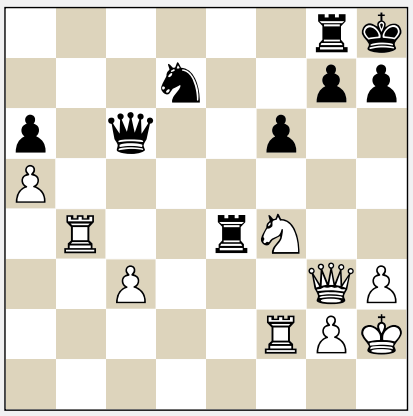
MAXIMize your Tactics

with Maxim Notkin

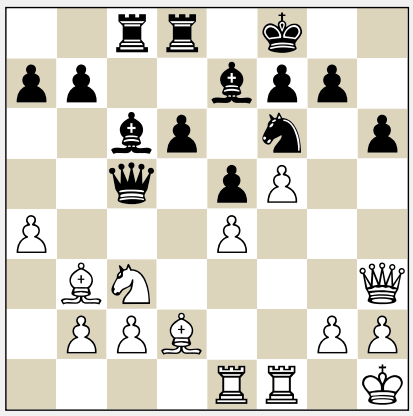
NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

Find the best move in the positions below

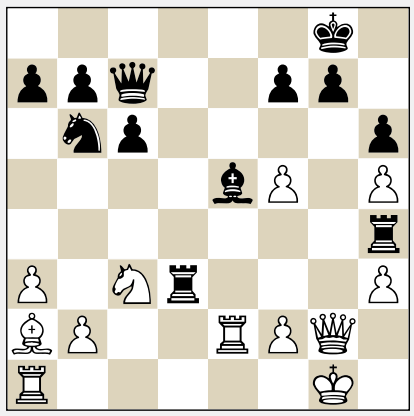
Solutions on page 95



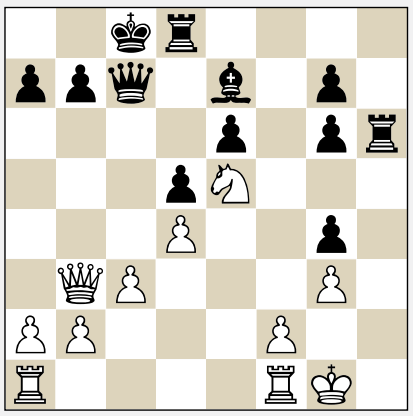
1. White to move



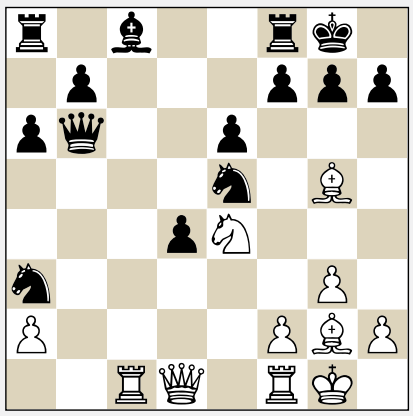
2. White to move



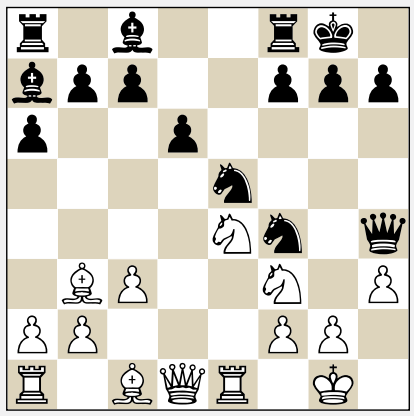
3. White to move



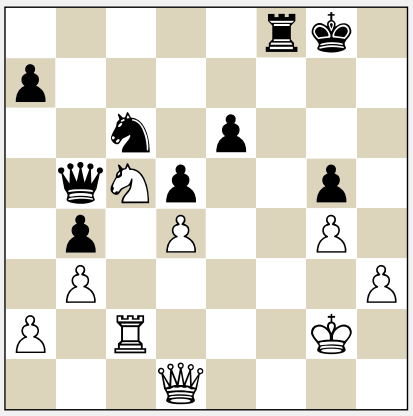
4. Black to move



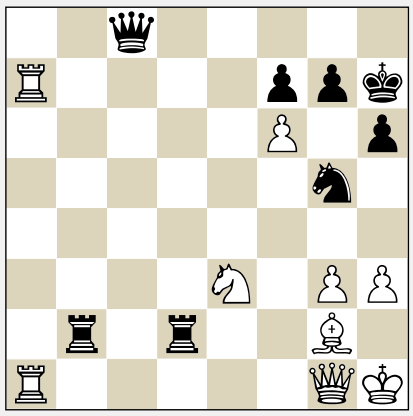
5. White to move



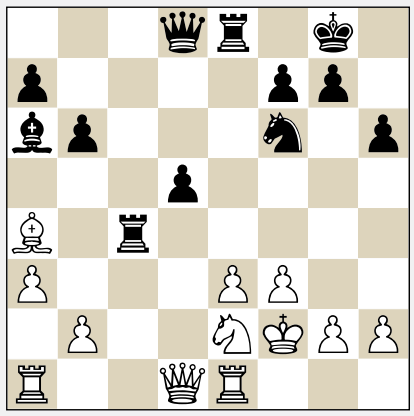
6. Black to move



7. Black to move



8. Black to move



9. Black to move

‘My dream has always been to become World Champion’

The fight for the World Championship has been on his mind ever since he became the youngest grandmaster in history at the age of 12 years and 7 months. With his win at the Candidates’ tournament in Moscow, 26-year-old Sergey Karjakin (finally!) obtained the right to play for the world title. An apt moment, **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** thought, to show the Challenger some photos and take a stroll down memory lane.

NEW IN CHESS

Moscow 2002

This was the first time I saw you, in Moscow in 2002. You were 12 years old and you had just become the youngest GM in history. Sitting next to you is Kateryna Lagno, 16 days 'older' than you. No doubt your dream, or the dream of the people around you, was to become World Champion. The youngest ever perhaps. How long did you think you'd need to get the highest title?

'About my future I was very confident. I was completely sure that I would be World Champion soon. No doubts (laughs). My plan was to be there at 16. But once I was 16, I thought 18, and then when I was 18, I realized that I still had to learn things. I was thinking like this because I was progressing and increasing my rating very fast, and I believed that this would be forever, that I would win so easily. Of course I was wrong. I underestimated the level of the strong guys. Maybe the first time I realized this was when I won the second group in Wijk aan Zee in 2005. This was an excellent achievement and the following year, when I turned 16, I played in the top group. In the first round I lost to Vishy Anand with White. I was very disappointed, because I felt I was killed without having been given a single chance. The rest of the tournament I played well, but I had come to understand that I had to improve.'

Wijk aan Zee 2005

The next famous photo was taken in Wijk aan Zee in 2005. You've just won the B-Group of the Corus Chess Tournament and qualified for next year's top group. You won with 9½ from 13. Magnus Carlsen, less than a year younger than you, but also born in 1990, finished in 7th place (7/13) and Alejandro Ramirez from Costa Rica (born in 1988 but also already a GM) finished in last place.
At the closing I asked the three of you to pose for this photo and the deal was that in 10 years' time we hoped to take a photo again and see where the three of you had ended up by then. What did you think at the time about the future of the three of you?

'Honestly speaking, I didn't consider Alejandro to be very dangerous. He could be a very decent chess player, that's for sure, but I never felt that he had the power like Magnus or Radjabov or Nakamura. As for Magnus, of course it was clear from the very beginning that he was a great talent. But still I didn't expect him to develop so fast; that was a surprise. Objectively I think I was stronger than Magnus maybe till I was 17. In 2006 I was still stronger, but we were more or less becoming equal. Till January 2006 I considered myself to be stronger than him. We had almost the same rating, maybe there was a two-point difference, but then it was very unpleas-

NEW IN CHESS

ant for me that I was not invited to Wijk aan Zee or Linares. While I was sitting at home, he was playing there. He didn't do so great in Wijk aan Zee, but he did well in Linares. He was basically improving tournament by tournament, while I didn't have these possibilities. That was his big advantage.'

Amsterdam 2006

Here we are on one of the Amsterdam canals during the first NH tournament in 2006, Rising Stars vs. Experience. Magnus looks clearly younger than you, but he had the best

NEW IN CHESS

score of the Rising Stars (half a point ahead of you) and qualified for the prestigious Amber Rapid and Blindfold tournament in Monaco in 2007.

'Of course I was disappointed, but actually he played a good tournament, while I was making too many draws. Also I was very angry with Ruslan Ponomariov, my coach, because I had the feeling that he was doing everything wrong. Normally speaking a coach should stimulate and encourage you, but he was doing just the opposite, telling me how badly I was playing and all the things I was doing wrong. Even if I won, he wouldn't say that I had played a good game. This was too much for me and I was very angry. Our friendship ended later, but I felt that there he didn't do his job very well. As for Magnus, I still felt he was very talented, but I also was a very decent player. I only started to get this feeling that he was stronger when he started to win everything in 2007. When he shot up to almost 2800. Then his results and rating were already better than mine.

'Yes, we got along well. But our relationship was always fine. Maybe he was angry sometimes when he lost, and of course I was not happy when I lost to him. That's normal. Actually, we always discussed our games independent of the result. I have no problems with him.'

Wijk aan Zee 2009

This photo was taken in Wijk aan Zee in 2009, one of the highlights in your career. Magnus, not daring to watch your game against King Loek (which ended in a draw), finished in 5th place, one point behind you, although at that point he was rated 70 points higher than you (2776-2706).

'Honestly speaking, I don't remember my game against Loek van Wely at all (laughs). I was just happy to play a good tournament and I was not thinking about Magnus. It was a key moment in my life, as I was about to change my federation (from the Ukrainian Chess Federation to the Russian – DJtG). I had other things on my mind.'

NEW IN CHESS

Wijk aan Zee 2010

Which takes us to the next photo, taken in Wijk aan Zee in 2010. By that time Magnus was the youngest number one in the world with a 2810 rating. He wins the tournament and also defeats you. You are rated 2720, the gap has grown. Do you remember whether you believed you could still challenge him one day?

'Yeah, actually I always had this feeling. It was basically all about me. I had the feeling that I had to improve my play. Actually, 2010 was a good year for me. After Wijk aan Zee I played a few very good tournaments, and at the end of the year my rating was something like 2765. I improved a lot. Of course this game was unpleasant, but I always had the feeling that I could do better. It's always the journalists that ask me what I think about Magnus Carlsen, what did you think about him five years ago or ten, but I was always looking at myself. And it's not only Magnus, there are many other players. There always were Aronian, Radjabov, Nakamura and other strong players.

NEW IN CHESS

'I think the move to Russia was the critical change in my life, because from 2003 till 2009 I didn't have any support. I was inviting coaches and paying them with my own money; it was very complicated and difficult. When I moved to Moscow, it was not only about the support of the federation, but the main thing was that I got the possibility to work with strong coaches. When I started to work with Motylev and Dokhoian, within one year I became a top-10 player, which was all because of this change. When you have a few constant coaches with whom you always work, this is a good thing. I had many weaknesses in my play and there was basically nobody who could help me or show me what I was doing wrong, but they helped me a lot, which was very much needed. And they are still helping me.'

Moscow 2010

Surrounded by spectators, you are playing Magnus at the World Blitz Championship in Moscow 2010. Magnus

failed to defend his 2009 title (he came third, Aronian won), but I seem to remember that the two of you had a good time, going out after the tournament and drinking B52's. Or was that after one of the Tal Memorials?

'If I am not mistaken, as you're talking about B52's, it was not in 2010, but in 2011. B52 is a famous Russian drink based on vodka, a cocktail, and before you drink it you set fire to it. I think he enjoyed the first couple he had... I wouldn't say that Magnus is my best friend, but we have completely normal relations. We talk and discuss things, not only about chess. He can be very funny. I cannot name any names, but I remember how we would call a player or a manager and make some offers, just for fun. I gave him some numbers he didn't know, gave him a phone and he made the calls. That was in the middle of the night and the next day I got some complaints because these people understood that he had gotten their numbers from me.'

Bazna 2011

COVER PHOTO: PETER DOGGERS

The cover of New In Chess 2011/5, showing the two of you as old buddies after you shared first prize in Bazna, Romania. Was that another sign that you could compete with him?

'Yes, I was in good form and in fact I had some chances in the last round, when I was facing Magnus with black. I was slightly better, but then I blundered something and then I decided to repeat moves. But still, I scored plus-3 without a single loss, and sharing first with Magnus was a very good result. I thought that everything was in my hands and that I could challenge him at some point, why not?'

Wijk aan Zee 2012

At the 2012 Tata Steel tournament you (2769) beat Magnus (2835) with the black pieces and you happily showed your win in the press room. Did this win have a special meaning for you?

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'Maybe a little bit, because this was my first victory against him when he was already very strong. I felt that I should have won at least one game against him before. Several times I had great chances and I didn't win a single one of those games, so it finally happened. I was happy, but of course it didn't come as a total surprise.'

Stavanger 2013

Stavanger 2013. In the first edition of Norway Chess you take first place ahead of Magnus, Anand and Nakamura. Did topping him on his home turf feel special?

NEW IN CHESS

'This was a very special tournament for me, right from the beginning. I had a fantastic start, winning my first four

games. It was completely amazing, but then the fifth game was one of the most disappointing games in my life. Of course you can lose to Magnus, also with White, but the way I lost was highly unpleasant, because I had a much better and totally risk-free position. I could continue to play without any risk, but I thought that I should try to win. I took a poisoned pawn, still had some chances, but he played really well after that. Still I was very happy that I won that tournament.'

Stavanger 2014

And the following year, in 2014, you won Norway Chess again! Magnus remained a good sport, but it must have hurt. At that point you had just married again and the future looked bright. Did you feel everything was going as it should go?

NEW IN CHESS

'Yes, I was completely fine. I was very happy with my wife and I didn't think too much about what was going to happen in my chess world. But I was already very confident, because before Norway I played well in the Candidates' tournament.'

Moscow 2016

The last photo is from the Candidates' tournament in Moscow, where following your win in the Baku World Cup, you won again. In both tournaments you survived scary moments and showed nerves of steel. What do these two victories say about your current strength? Have you grown as a player in the past year?
'Yes, I think it shows that I am getting stronger. I am on the right track and I think I am still improving. I don't see why I should not improve more for the match. As Pavel Eljanov said, I played badly in the World Cup, but I managed to win. I played better in the Candidates' tournament and I managed to win, and I have to play even better in a match against Magnus, but from my point of view I can do it. I will surely try to show my best, but we will see who will win.'

Then one of the first decisions after you won the Candidates' was to skip Norway Chess. How did you decide that?

NEW IN CHESS

'Before the Candidates' I was obviously going to play, because I had signed the contract, but after the tournament I realized that I was completely exhausted. I didn't have any energy, nothing, and I just wanted to sleep and have a rest. And I had to give thousands of interviews, which I still have, and it was clear that I would not be able to prepare properly. I felt mentally depleted, completely exhausted. I am very sorry about that, but that is how it was. The past few nights I have only slept six or seven hours, not because I don't want to sleep more, but because there are so many commitments. Interest in Russia is huge and I am using this time to speak to people so that chess gets even more popular again.'

Some people will also suggest some sort of vengeance, because despite being a two-time winner you were not invited to Norway Chess last year. Did that play a role?
'Well, maybe 10 per cent, but 90 per cent of the reason was my tiredness.'

You mean it makes you feel slightly less guilty?
'Yes, yes (laughs).'

At the closing you dedicated your victory to Russia and Crimea, where you were born. Are you ready to bring back the world title to Russia?
'That is my dream. And of course I want to dedicate it to my family, to my wife and to my son. This is our victory, not only mine. And it is of course very much about my coaches, who helped me a lot. My dream has always been to become World Champion and I have a chance now. I will play against Magnus, why not? It didn't go like I thought when I was 12, but still I am very happy that I have this chance. But I don't think this has to change my attitude towards him. Some people try to tell me that now he has to be my enemy, but take a look at chess history and analyse the match between Botvinnik and Tal. Before the match Botvinnik was persistently trying to project Tal as his worst enemy, while Tal was doing the exact opposite and said he had no problems with him. And I think Botvinnik was very angry because of that. I mean, it depends on the person and as I have no problems with Magnus, I would not know why he should be my enemy.' ■

move by move goes from strength to strength

By continually challenging the reader to answer probing questions throughout the book, the move by move format greatly encourages the learning and practising of vital skills just as much as the traditional assimilation of opening knowledge.

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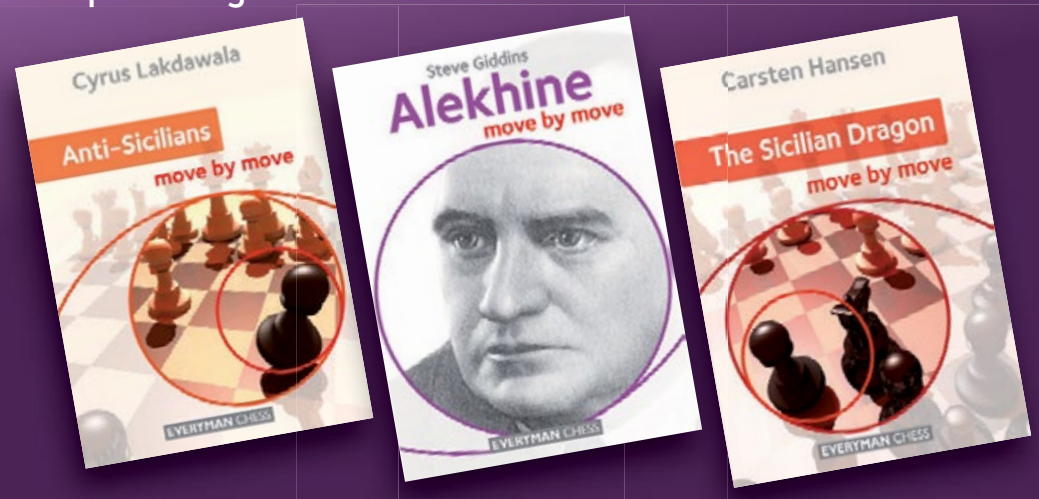

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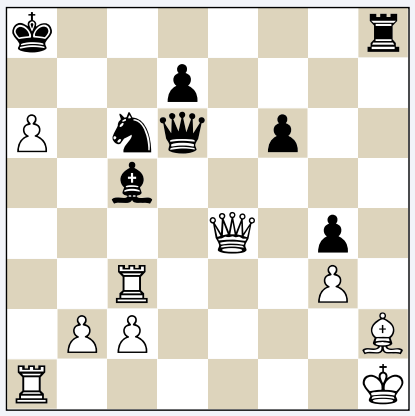
Judit Polgar

All the Queen's queens

Needless to say **JUDIT POLGAR**, with her love for the attack, has always been very attached to the hyper-mobile queen.

During my childhood and teenage years, the queen occupied an essential place in my games. Its huge mobility and flexibility and unexpected forays to remote areas of the board suited my dynamic style perfectly, and I usually felt uncomfortable after a queen exchange. It was only much later, after developing my technical skills, that I accepted there can be a proper chess game without queens on the board!

It may be suggestive, though, that the last trick of my career as a player, in my penultimate official game, was based on the queen's hyper-mobility.

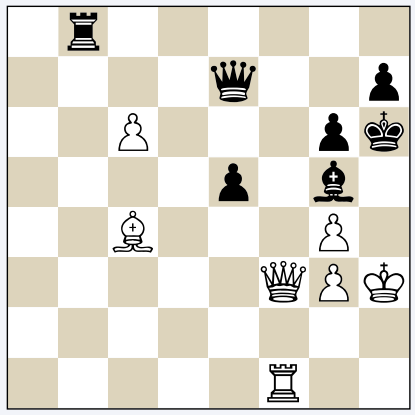


Guerrero-Polgar
Tromsø Olympiad 2014
position after 33.g3

White has a huge material advantage and for the time being the bishop seems to protect the king satisfactorily, as my queen is relatively far away. But this is just an illusion, as chess geometry has its own rules.

33...♖xh2+! 34.♔xh2 ♕d2+, and my opponent resigned. If 35.♔h1 ♕h6+ (the same reply would follow after 35.♕g2) 36.♔g2 ♕h3 the queen would end up its spectacular zigzagging with a mate.

In his famous gallery of chess players portraits, Botvinnik stated that one of the main threats of his old rival Max Euwe was his ability to make long and surprising queen moves. Botvinnik surely knew what he was speaking about, as he wrote a book on the return match Alekhine-Euwe 1937, but I actually found a few relevant examples in their first world title match in 1935. Here is my favourite:



Euwe-Alekhine
Netherlands 1935
World Championship match, Game 2
position after 41...♔h6

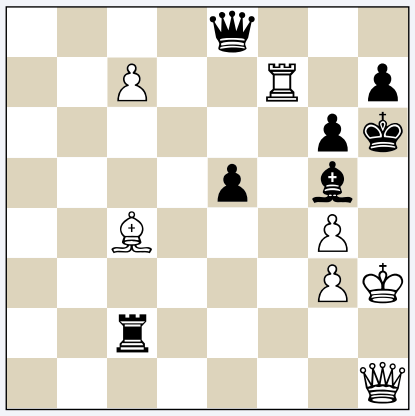
Both kings are placed unnaturally, but paradoxically enough, White's double pawns offer a better shelter than Black's impeccable kingside structure.

42.♕h1! An elegant retreat to the corner, threatening 43.♔g2+ ♔g7 44.♖f7+ or vice versa.

42...♖b2 Parrying the threat, but White finds another way to attack the Achilles' heel in Black's position (h7).

43.♖f7 ♕e8 44.c7 Unlike Black's central pawn, the white one is a serious danger, inducing Black to give up his control of the b7-square with his next move.

44...♖c2

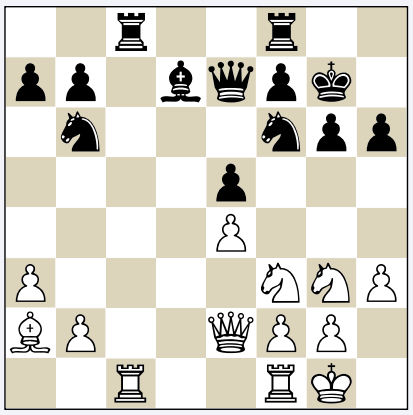


45.♕b7! This is the kind of move Botvinnik was talking about. The sudden queen switch threatens to promote the pawn and uses the seventh rank for endangering h7. Alekhine resigned in view of 45...♖xc4 46.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 47.c8♕+. By the way, 46.c8♕? is worse because of 46...♕xf7! 47.♕xf7 ♖xc8, with a probable draw.

The queen's strength is not illustrated only by long incursions from one wing to another, though. Short moves tend to change its whole area of influence, inducing major changes in the overall dynamic balance of the position. Typically, one's opponent may get confused, failing to understand all the consequences of such a move.

I will illustrate this theme starting with another game by Alekhine, with the difference that Alexander Alexandrovich

was on the bright side of the result this time.



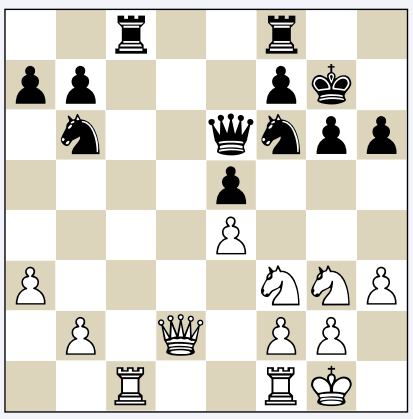
Alekhine-Capablanca
Buenos Aires 1927
World Championship match, Game 34
position after 20...h6

This was the 34th and, as things turned out, last game of the match, yielding Alekhine the long dreamed-of title. White is well organized, but his queen is not very mobile. Alekhine's following subtle move changes this radically.

21.♕d2!? Suddenly the queen controls practically all important areas of the board. Capablanca must have noticed mainly the pressure along the d-file and the potential threat of a kingside attack based on ♘h4 and ♘f5, which was quite typical for his opponent and would definitely be an issue after 21...♗c6, but overlooked a third aspect.

21...♗e6 As pointed out by Lasker, 21...♘a4 would have been an entirely satisfactory way to anticipate White's 23rd move.

22.♗xe6 ♕xe6



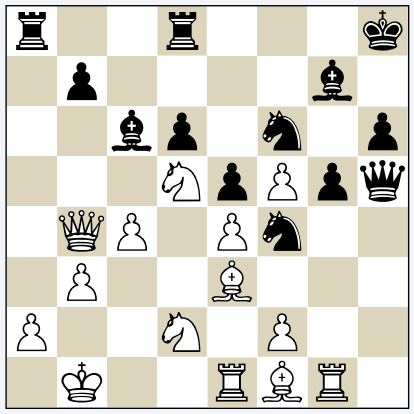
Things look safe in the centre and on the kingside now, but less so on the queenside.

23.♕a5 The double attack on a7 and e5

'It was only much later that I accepted there can be a proper chess game without queens on the board!'

wins a pawn. Concretely, things are far from simple yet, but Capablanca failed to find the best defences, eventually losing the game and the match.

I managed to catch a then still future World Champion unawares with a similar move in the next example.



Carlsen-Polgar
Mexico City 2012 (rapid)
position after 27...♖fd8

Despite my previous efforts to unbalance the position dynamically, White retains his material and positional advantage. Carlsen's next move, apparently consolidating his centre, unexpectedly runs into a nasty trick.

28.f3?? Probably aiming to restrict my queen, but achieving exactly the opposite.

28...♕h4!

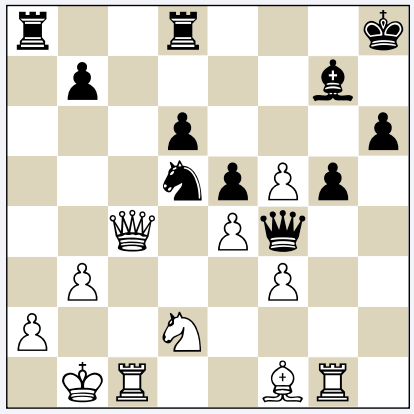
Here it comes, the short queen move with devastating effect. The e1-rook is hanging with check and there is a sudden pin along the fourth rank.

29.♖c1 Sadly, there is nothing better for White.

29...♗xd5? The start of a typical exchange of inaccuracies in rapid chess. The correct move order was 29...♘4xd5! 30.cxd5 ♘xd5. White cannot defend his bishop and the best thing he could try would be to get a pawn for it by 31.♗xg5 hxg5, something I wanted to avoid during the game, but this would be just hopeless for White anyway.

30.cxd5? Losing without a fight.

I had examined 30.♗xf4! ♕xf4 31.cxd5 ♘xd5 32.♕c4.



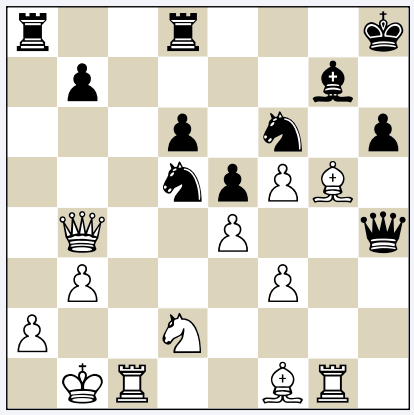
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Both knights are hanging, but I thought 32...♕xd2, threatening 33...♕xa2 mate, would be curtains. Actually, I stopped my calculating one move too early, since 33.♖g2 parries the threat and gains the time needed to retrieve the knight.

If the game had taken this course, I might have noticed the last move and deviated earlier.

After 32...♘e3 33.♕e2 Black is better, but has to display a certain imagination to get the attack going: 33...d5 is not a bad move, but probably better would be 33...♘xf5 34.exf5 d5, and in view of the dangerous threats along the a1-h8 and b1-h7 diagonals, White would have to return the piece with ♘d2-e4 soon, thus blocking my e5-pawn.

30...♘4xd5 31.♗xg5



31...♕xg5! The clearest win, forcing the exchange of the queens due to the hanging g1-rook.

32.♖xg5 ♘xb4 33.♖g2 d5, and I won on move 50. ■

Alexander Alekhine

Chess engines have opened up new vistas, often showing us moves that seem to be beyond human imagination. **MIHAIL MARIN**, a great believer in the human mind, returns to a wizard of the chess board who churned out 'computer moves' long before the advent of the silicon monster.

Alekhine's computer moves

A Tactical Feast

Birth of a fascination. Seven-year-old Mihail Marin with the first chess book he ever read, the mesmerizing *300 Selected Games of Alekhine*.

Among the many aspects of the massively increased use of chess engines over the past decades (many of them positive but quite a few less so), one thing that continues to intrigue me is the frequent use of comments like 'This is clearly a crazy/strong/humanly impossible move.'

As a traditionalist, I will never give up the idea that top players, including (or especially) those from before the computerized era, should be able to find the best move in any given position, either over the board or in the peace of the home 'laboratory', no matter how well hidden or irrational it is. In principle, this is equally difficult to prove or refute, so the whole issue remains mainly a question of personal view. But recently I realized that one of my first chess idols used to deliver moves in his games and analysis that nowadays would probably be classified as 'computer moves'.

To chess history *connoisseurs* my 'next move' may seem obvious, based on the fact that Capablanca used to be called a 'chess machine'. But this

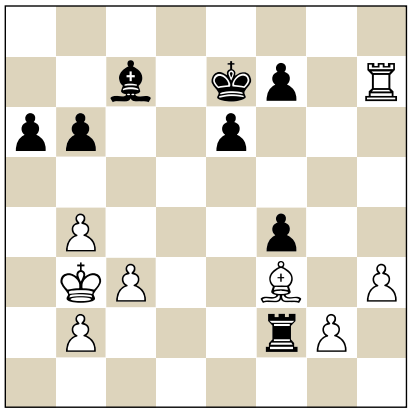
term had a different meaning then, mainly connected to the myth of Capablanca's invincibility, and it is not the great Cuban I am referring to, but his successor to the crown, Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine.

Ever since I was a child, my fascination with the genuine chess jewels from *300 selected games of Alekhine, annotated by himself*, collected and prefaced with a long and strongly politicized biography by Vasily Panov, has stayed vivid in my memory, although over the following decades I did not open the book more than occasionally. Recently things changed, though.

It so happened that, contrary to my habits and principles, I could not dedicate a single day to getting into shape for my last three tournaments in 2015. Slightly alarmed by this, I decided to mend things by replacing my morning preparation with playing over a few games from a classical book, looking for mental refreshment and inspiration.

While scanning my relatively large library, my hand unaccountably picked up precisely this book, the first one I ever read. The poor condition of the pages, the fruit of my diligence as a child combined with the merciless passing of time, made me adjust my initial plan slightly by packing the original Russian edition printed on coated paper, which had passed the test of time much better.

My main 'plan' worked out perfectly, as I played some interesting games with a fairly good rating gain, but one side-effect of my decision was unexpected. During my tournament weeks I more than once stared at Alekhine's comment in disbelief, asking myself: 'Is this really a human move or line?' Despite my respect for the past, I seem to be so intoxicated by the 'computer move' syndrome that I was not entirely prepared for finding them in games played almost a century ago. In what follows I will share with you some of the most relevant fragments.



Alekhine-Tartakower
Vienna 1922
position after 29..♖xf2

Alekhine correctly observes that Black's only mistake took place five moves earlier, but at first sight the current position does not look so clear. White is very active and the black bishop is temporarily passive, but in the long run the central majority could become threatening.

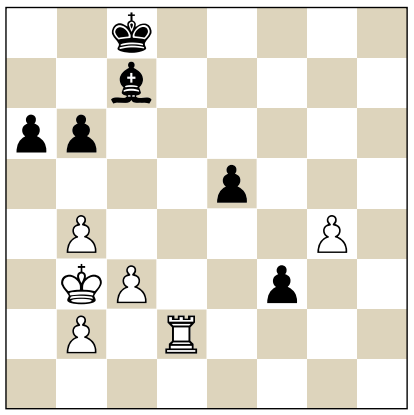
I more than once stared at Alekhine's comment in disbelief, asking myself: 'Is this really a human move or line?'

Alekhine writes that his next move required accurate calculation and that he considered himself 'lucky' to have found the 36th move in advance. I must confess that I am slightly sceptical about many of Alekhine's comments of this kind, claiming he had seen 'everything' from the start of a forced variation. I tend to believe that in most cases his intuition also played a part and that he used to calculate just as much as common sense required, but in this position I trust him entirely. He would hardly have allowed Black to create two connected passed pawns if he had not found the winning resource.

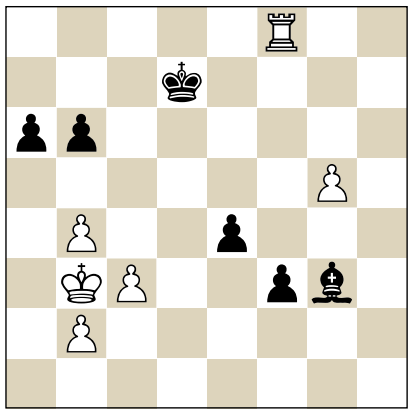
30.♗h5! ♖xg2 31.♖xf7+ ♔d8

Now and on the next move Black cannot afford to lose any of his pawns, as this would doom him to a joyless and probably unsuccessful defence a pawn down. For instance: 31...♔d6 32.♖xf4.

32.♗g4 e5 33.♖d7+ ♔c8 34.♖d2+! ♖xg4! 35.hxg4 f3



This phase was played very consistently by both players, and Black's pawns seem to ensure him entirely adequate compensation. In order to win White would need to place his rook behind the f-pawn and hurry with the king to block the pawns. After he had completed his regrouping the h-pawn would have its decisive tell. Alekhine analyses four alternatives to his continuation, all of them failing by just one tempo. With the exception of a few minor flaws in the relatively long lines, his analysis and evaluations are correct. Here is the most interesting one, in which he also commits the most significant mistake: 36.♖h2 e4 37.♖h8+ ♔d7 38.♖f8 ♗g3! (the only move, threatening ...e4-e3-e2) 39.g5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

♗d6(?) 40.♖f6 (actually, 40.♖f7+! ♔e6 41.g6 consolidates the rook on the f-file, ensuring the win after the king's approach) 40...♗e5 41.♖f7+ ♔e6 'and Black draws by attacking the rook, which cannot abandon the f-file.' The idea from the last comment is correct, but the move order can be improved on: 39...♔e7! 40.♖f5 ♔e6 41.♖f6+ ♔e7 42.♔c2 ♗e5 43.♖f5 ♔e6, and so on.

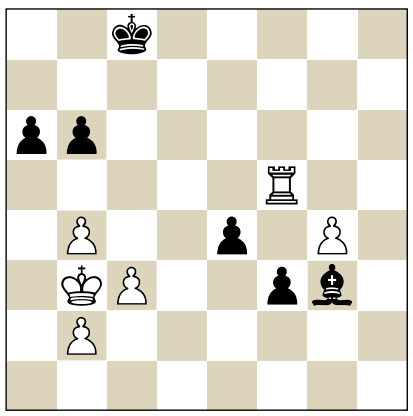
36.♖d5!! This looks a bit insane as the rook has even fewer prospects on this square than before. But Alekhine had understood that time was essential, so he prepared to meet Black's most principled move, ...e5-e4, with ♖f5, gaining a vital tempo over the examined lines.

If you did not know the game was played many decades before chess engines came up, wouldn't you be tempted to call 36.♖d5 a computer move? And do not forget, Alekhine had to have seen it when embarking on the forced line with 30.♗h5!.

Anyway, White threatens either the king's approach or the simple advance of the g-pawn so Black cannot wait.

36...e4 36...f2 is refuted elegantly with 37.♖d1! e4 38.♔c2 ♗f4 39.♖f1, followed by ♔d1-e2. It is obvious that ♖d2-d5-d1 does not waste time, since the f-pawn has worsened its coordination with the rest of the army by making the e2-square available.

37.♖f5 ♗g3 A familiar move under much worse circumstances.



38.g5! It is Black who now has to use a tempo to stop the pawn or generate counterplay.

38...♔d7

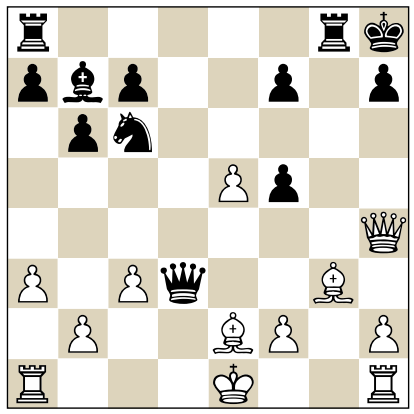
The common view is that Alexander Alekhine used to omit the missed chances of his opponent in his analysis, but there are many cases where the fourth World Champion does the opposite.

The thematic 38...e3 39.♖xf3 e2 does not work due to 40.♖e3 e1♕ 41.♖xe1 ♗xe1 42.g6, winning.

39.g6 ♔e6 40.g7 As we already know, 40.♖f7 is also sufficient for a win. But Alekhine correctly assessed the position after the pawn promotion.

40...♔xf5 41.g8♕ ♗f4 42.♕f7+ ♔g4 43.♕g6+ ♗g5 44.♕xe4+ ♔g3 45.♕g6 ♔g4 46.♕xb6 1-0.

From the early days when computers started defeating grandmasters, one of the most typical human failures was overlooking hidden tactical defences when carrying out sacrificial attacks or embarking on sharp lines with mutual heavy blows, as in a heavy-weight boxing match. The common view is that Alekhine used to (deliberately or not) omit mentioning his opponents' missed chances in an attempt to present his games as logically coherent, but there are many cases where he does the opposite. His analysis of Euwe's possible improvement at the critical moment in the next game contains many moves which nowadays would be considered the fruit of computer analysis.



Alekhine-Euwe
Netherlands 1935 (7th match game)
position after 21.♗e2

The highly controversial 7.g4 eventually yielded Alekhine a powerful attack, but a later inaccuracy allowed Black to create counterplay.

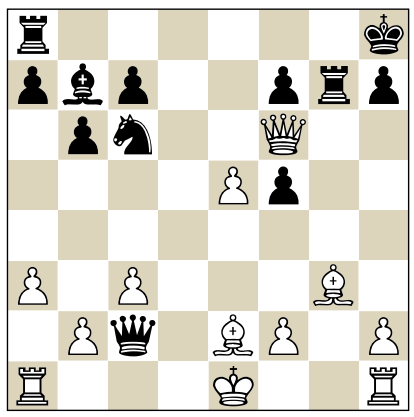
Euwe played 21...♕e4? 22.♕xe4 fxe4 (vainly hoping for ...♖xg3, followed by ...♘xe5) 23.♗h4!. 'The winning move, probably overlooked by Black when he played 21...♕e4' (Alekhine).

In his comments to 21...♕e4 Alekhine writes: 'Pity that Black avoids the fantastical complications arising after **21...♕c2!** This move would have secured him a draw.'

The following analysis clearly speaks against Alekhine's desire to hush up matters, while starting the comment with 'pity' is suggestive of his avid desire for truth and logic.

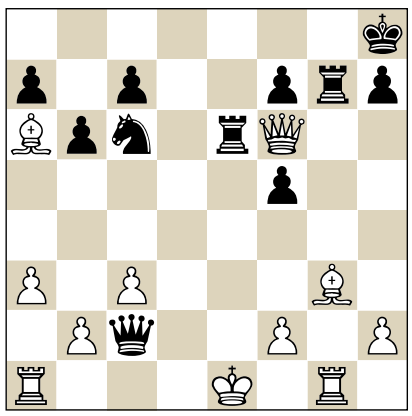
Euwe must have underestimated Black's defensive resources after:

22.♕f6+ ♖g7



23.♖g1! The necessary preparation of e5-e6, followed by ♗e5.

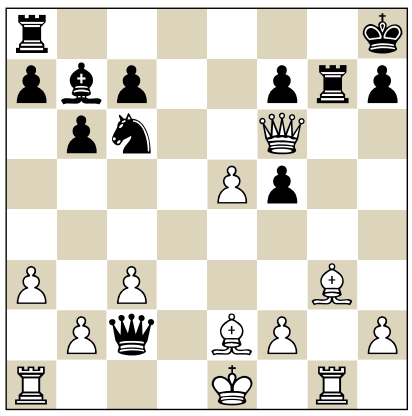
Alekhine's next line, proving 23.e6? to have been premature, is a tactical feast: 23...♖e8!. Pinning the pawn and creating an indirect attack against the e2-bishop, but as we will see the latter is much more refined an issue. 24.♖g1! ♗a6!! (only this bolt from the blue neutralizes the threats, as the obvious 24...♖xe6? runs into 25.♗e5!, as indicated by Alekhine) 25.♗xa6 ♖xe6+



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26.♗e5!! ♕e4+! (26...♖xf6 27.♗xf6, followed by ♗xg7, not mentioned by Alekhine, offers White a decisive material advantage and attack) 27.♔f1 ♕xe5!, with an extra pawn for Black in the endgame.

Alekhine's line is somewhat spoiled by the fact that after 25...♕xb2! 26.♖d1 ♖xe6+ 27.♗e5 Black has 27...♕xc3+!. A spectacular check, to be followed by ...♕xe5, reaching a similar position after grabbing two more pawns on the way. This is the only instance in this article that Alekhine's line is clearly 'human'. He intended to prove 23.e6 premature in order to justify 23.♖g1. Finding a clear win for Black was completely beyond his purpose.



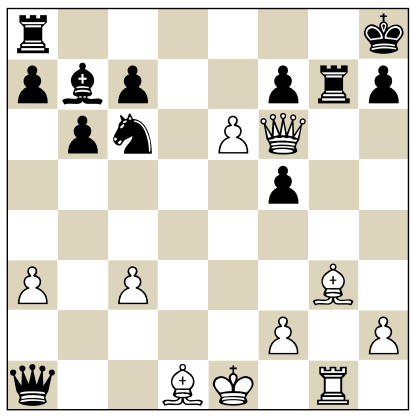
23...♕xb2

With the king's residence burning, quite a cool-blooded move. The point is that Black needs a later check on c3.

24.e6!!

Reminiscent of the Immortal Game Anderssen-Kieseritzky. The c3-pawn is more important than the rock.

24...♕xa1+ 25.♗d1



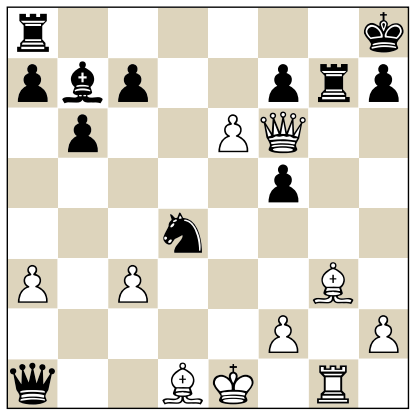
The culminating moment of the analysis. Black has no more checks and in combination with exf7 the threat ♗e5 looks lethal.

Alekhine is right when discarding 25...♖d8 on account of 26.♗d6!, obstructing the enemy rook and clearing the path for his own. For instance: 26...♖dg8 27.exf7.

He errs, though, when indicating 25...♕b1 26.♗d6! as winning, since Black has 26...♕e4+, with a perpetual. The correct answer is 26.f3!, preventing 26...♕e4 and leaving Black helpless against the existing threats.

I will leave you the pleasure to evaluate whether the solution found by Alekhine is 'human' or not.

25...♘d4!!



This knight jump is based on a combination of themes, such as interference and decoying. Instead of an easy win White suddenly needs to find a draw. Alekhine's analysis remains brilliant until the end.

26.♕xg7+!

Using the remaining dynamism of White's position to force a draw.

There is something intriguing in his comments, though. From the possible captures on d4 he only mentions 26.♕xd4, with the brief comment that this does not offer winning chances either. In fact, after 26...f6! 27.♕xf6 ♔g8, Black is better. The point is that he has used the extra time to remove the possibility of exf7+, keeping a material advantage despite having invested a knight and a pawn.

There is not a word about 26.cxd4?, which loses to 26...♕c3+ 27.♔f1 ♕d3+ 28.♔e1 ♖e8 29.♗e5 ♕c3+ 30.♔f1 ♗a6+ 31.♗e2 ♕a1 mate. This moment reminds me of a typical situation in modern comments. While following the engine's main line, we rarely have the curiosity to take a breath and ask ourselves: what happens if White were to take the knight? This does not affect the objective correctness of the analysis, but it often lowers its instructional value.

With Alekhine things were different, of course. To a brilliant mind like his, the lines above must have seemed too trivial to mention. But once again, if we did not know the year when this analysis was published, we could easily believe it was the fruit of repeatedly pressing the space bar to follow the engine's line.

26...♔xg7 27.♗h4+ ♔h6!

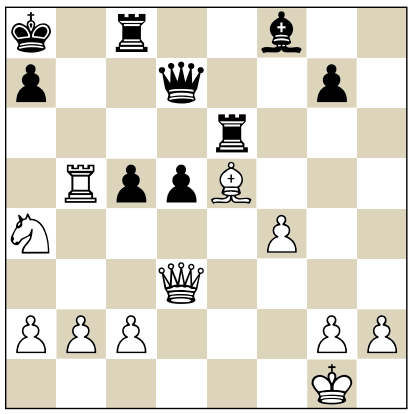
27...♔f8? 28.e7+ ♔e8 29.♖g8+ ♔d7 30.♖d8+, Alekhine.

28.♗g5+! ♔g7 29.♗h4+ with a perpetual.

Even though these lines were left behind the scenes, they surely add a lot of value to the book and, the way I see it, they provide me with relevant arguments for my general discourse.

The syndrome mentioned above about omitting important lines is

even clearer in the very first game from the book.



Alekhine-Rosanov
Moscow 1907
position after 35...♖c8

Played by Alekhine at the age of 15, this game is mainly famous for his rook sacrifice 23.♖e6!, turning the tables in what looked like a lost position. But to me the most intriguing moment occurred in the current position.
White has two pawns for the exchange and excellent attacking chances. In fact, the black king's position looks terrible. As ironically stated by Alekhine, it is hard to imagine that Black had actually castled kingside!

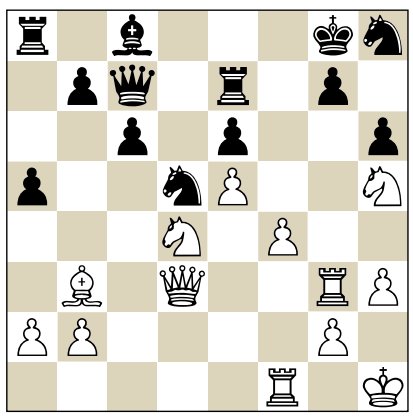
36.c4!

A thematic move, fighting against the hanging pawns and aiming to weaken the long diagonal. Black answered 36...a6, and lost quickly after 37.♘b6+.
Alekhine examines the following line: 36...d4 37.♘xc5! ♗xc5 38.♕f3+ ♖ec6 39.♖xc5, with quite a bunch of pawns for the exchange.
My alarm bells immediately started ringing. Quicker than it would take to ask what about 38...♕c6, I calculated 39.♖xc5 ♕xf3 40.♖xc8+ ♔b7 41.♖b8+! (saving the rook with tempo) 41...♔c6 42.gxf3.
I later found out that computers evaluate 38...♖c6 slightly above +2, while 38...♕c6 is punished with the severe +8, but I knew I wouldn't forgive myself having omitted the latter if I had analysed the game myself. Just like the engines, Alekhine must have been more concerned with the absolute truth than with the didactic character of his comments, or the thought that some of his readers might have problems spotting the point of his combination.

I am sure that most of you have sometimes noticed the curious 'behaviour' of the engines shortly after being switched on in a given position. For just an instant a curious line is touted as clear favourite but then disappears from, say, the top-3 lines.

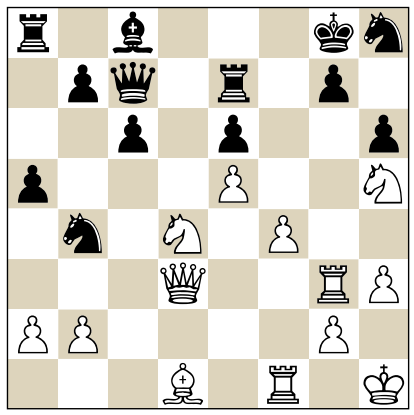
'We should be more respectful to humankind, and say that engines have managed to emulate the best of the great champions of the past...'

The next example shows that in a way Alekhine had a similar thinking algorithm.



Alekhine-West
Portsmouth 1923
position after 27...♕c7

White has an overwhelming advantage and far more than one way to win. Alekhine played the simple **28.♗xd5 exd5 29.♘f6+** and Black resigned, for if 29...♔f7 (or 29...♔f8 30.♕h7), then 30.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 31.♕h7+.
Nothing really thrilling so far, but in his comments to 28.♗xd5 Alekhine writes that he had felt the temptation to play 28.♗d1 (a mysterious retreat with a hidden attacking hope) 28...♘b4? (this, however, is an apparently attacking move that just weakens the king's defences)



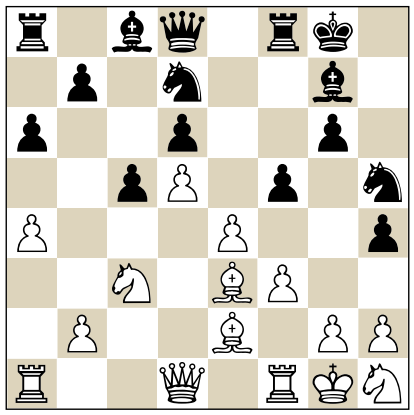
29.♕h7+!! ♔xh7 30.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 31.♘f6+ ♔g6 32.♗h5 mate.
Unfortunately, Black does not have to leave the f6-square undefended to allow this combination, which explains why he dropped 28.♗d1 from the list of his top-3 candidates. But it also shows that Alekhine was constantly trying to build up mating and other attacking patterns. True, in this game this was not really necessary, but many of his famous combinations must have been born like that.

Of course, not all Alekhine's games and analyses are as accurate as those examined above, but my main point is that the human mind has unlimited powers, if we only press its pedal when needed. And rather than being amazed that player X has found a computer move, we should be more respectful to humankind, to ourselves and our history and say that engines have managed to emulate the best of the great champions of the past... ■

The knight that has no fear

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

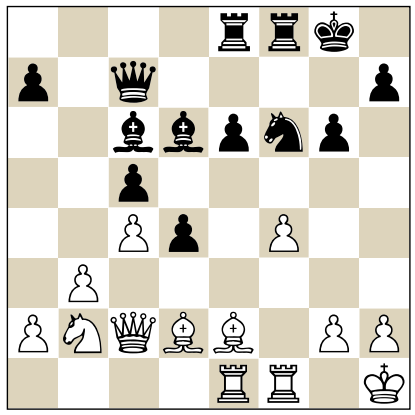
The move ...♘h5 bears the stamp of Bobby Fischer, but the American wasn't the only one who didn't mind doubled h-pawns, and let his pieces do the talking.



Vachier-Lagrave-Nakamura
St. Louis 2015
position after 14...f5

15.f4 ♕e8!? Due to the threatened capture on h5, 15...♘hf6 could be an instant reflex, but Nakamura allows the doubling of pawns on the h-file! Another possibility that would also allow for doubling the h-pawn would be a genuine pawn sac with 15...fxe4 16.♗xh5 gxh5 17.♕xh5 (17.♘xe4 ♖e8 18.♘hf2 ♘f6 19.♘xf6+ ♕xf6) 17...♘f6 18.♕xh4 ♘g4 19.♕xd8 ♖xd8, when Black's activity and bishop pair give sufficient compensation. **16.♗xh5 gxh5 17.e5!** The critical approach! After 17.♘f2 fxe4 18.♘cxe4 ♘f6 19.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 Black's bishops already rule. **17...dxe5 18.d6! exf4 19.♗xf4 ♘f6 20.♘f2 ♗d7 21.♘d3 h3 22.♘e5** 22.gxh3 ♕g6+ 23.♗g3 ♘e4 is obviously too dangerous. **22...hxg2** And while the position remained complicated after **23.♖e1**, you cannot deny that the doubled pawn already had done a decent job.

After the game Nakamura, when questioned about the ...♘h5 idea, referred to the obvious example Spassky-Fischer (and also to a recent game Giri-Gelfand). Before we come to that, I will give you a very early example, which clearly demonstrates the advantages obtained in exchange for the mutilated pawn structure: the bishop pair and the half-open g-file.



Showalter-Janowski
New York 1899 (1st match game)
position after 24.♗e2

24...♘h5!? 24...e5 would also have yielded Black a couple of shining bishops and a huge advantage, but the text-move has its own charm, as well as the advantage of opening up the g-file. **25.♗xh5 gxh5 26.♘d3 ♖f6**
The major pieces are directed to the g-file. This, together with the pressure along the a8-h1-diagonal and possibly the advance ...h5-h4-h3, give White a tough defence. **27.♕d1? ♖g6 28.♖f2 ♕b7** And here 28...♕g7 would have been the most logical and strongest move: 29.♕e2 (29.♕xh5 ♖f8 30.♕e2 e5!) 29...h4 30.h3 ♖g3.

And now the doubtlessly most famous example of the fearless knight move to h5.

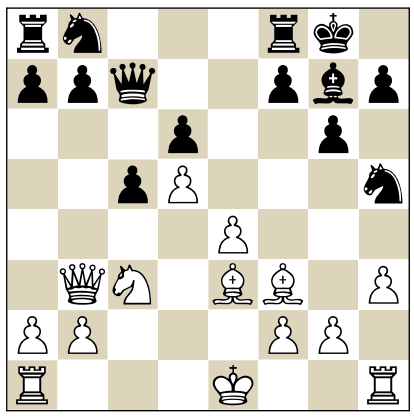
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘c3 g6 7.♘d2 ♘bd7 8.e4 ♗g7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.♕c2

Spassky-Fischer
Reykjavik 1972 (3th match game)
position after 11.♕c2

Two-nil down in your coveted World Championship match, so what the heck: **11...♘h5!? 12.♗xh5 gxh5** Black's pieces will flow easily to the kingside. Spassky's timid reaction allowed Black to equalize comfortably after **13.♘c4 ♘e5 14.♘e3 ♕h4 15.♗d2 ♘g4 16.♘xg4 hxg4,** after which Fischer proceeded to score his first win.

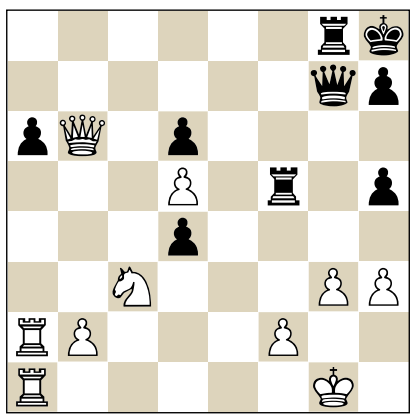
A small essay can be devoted to Fischer's 11th move ('Fischer's tendency to hug the edge' – Reuben Fine), but Bondarevsky's reference to a game played just a month before is of relevance to our pattern. Both players would have been aware of this game:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.♗f4 ♗g7 8.♕a4+ ♗d7 9.♕b3 ♕c7 10.e4 0-0 11.♗e2 ♘h5 12.♗e3 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3



Timman-Ljubojevic
Amsterdam 1972
position after 14.♗xf3

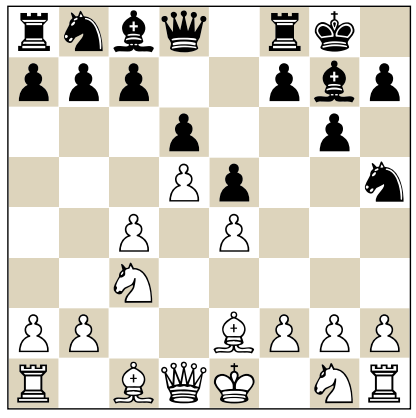
14...♘d7 14...♘f6 15.e5!. **15.♗xh5 gxh5** And even without the pair of bishops Black had sufficient activity and eventually won with the help of the g-file. **16.0-0 ♖ae8 17.♕c2 a6 18.a4 ♕d8 19.a5 ♔h8 20.♖a4 ♕c8 21.♘d1 b5 22.axb6 ♘xb6 23.♖a2 f5 24.♕b3 ♕b7 25.exf5 ♖xf5 26.♘c3 ♗d4 27.♖fa1 ♕g7 28.♕xb6 ♖g8 29.♗xd4 cxd4 30.g3**



30...♖xf2 31.♕xd6 ♖f6 32.♕xf6 ♕xf6 33.♘e4 ♕e5 34.♖e1 ♖xg3+ 35.♘xg3 ♕xe1+ 36.♘f1 ♕b1 37.♖xa6 d3 0-1.

It is not unlikely, though, that both players had more historical knowledge. In this tournament the black player came within an inch of challenging Botvinnik for the world title. Look what he did here:
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.d4 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.d5 ♘h5

'At the time a courageous experiment' – Suetin. **8.♘g1**

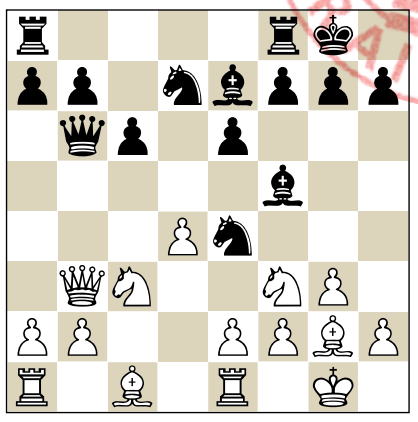


Szabo-Boleslavsky
Budapest Candidates' 1950
position after 8.♘g1

8...♘d7!? A true sacrifice this time! Just like 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘h5 4.♗e2 d6!?, which once got Carlsen's approval. It has to be said that, objectively, 8...♘f4 is the better move. **9.♗xh5 gxh5 10.♕xh5 ♘c5 11.♘f3 f5 12.0-0 f4!?** A practical decision. Both 12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♘g5 ♗f5 15.♕e2 and 12...fxe4 13.♘g5 ♗f5 14.♗e3 leave White in control. **13.b4 ♘d7 14.♗b2 ♕e7 15.♘g5 ♘f6 16.♕h4?** Now White's queen gets into trouble and Boleslavsky gets full compensation. 16.♕d1 ♗h6 17.♘f3 ♔h8 – while commentator Suetin had faith in Black's attacking chances, your engine will not. A typical difference in evaluation, which makes the King's Indian such an interesting opening according to Nakamura. **16...h6 17.♘f3 ♕f7 18.♘d2 ♘g4 19.f3 ♘e3 20.♖fc1 ♔h7 21.♘d1 ♗f6 22.♕f2 ♖g8 23.♘xe3 fxe3 24.♕xe3 ♗g5 25.♕e2 ♗xd2 26.♕xd2 ♗h3 27.g3 ♕xf3 28.♖c3 ♕xe4** and Black went on to win.

By now, white players have found more challenging retorts than Spassky's in the Benoni, but in another opening the fearless knight leap to the side has come into fashion.

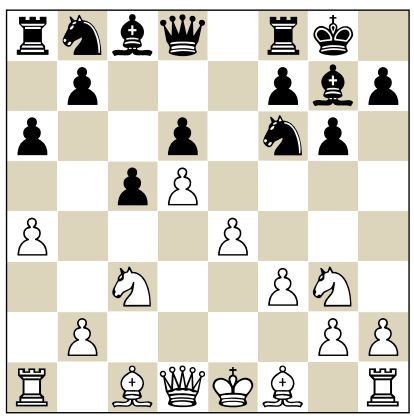
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♕c2 dxc4 5.♕xc4 ♗f5 6.g3 ♘bd7 7.♘c3 e6 8.♗g2 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 ♘e4 11.♕b3 ♕b6



Aronian-Anand
Morelia/Linares 2007
position after 11...♕b6

12.♘h4 ♗xh4 13.gxh4! ♘ef6 14.e4 ♗g6 14...♕xb3 would worsen the white pawn structure even more, but after 15.axb3 ♗g6 16.♗f4 Black's rooks would be more passive. **15.♕xb6 axb6 16.♗f4** Here White's spatial advantage, based on his pawn centre and his bishop pair, proved to outweigh his bad pawn structure. A tense battle was ahead.

And finally, Naka's other source of inspiration:
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 e6 4.e4 c5 5.d5 d6 6.♘c3 exd5 7.cxd5 ♗g7 8.♘ge2 0-0 9.♘g3 a6 The immediate 9...♘h5!? has also been tried. **10.a4**



Giri-Gelfand
Tashkent 2014
position after 10.a4

10...♘h5 11.♘xh5 gxh5 Obviously no bishop pair here as compensation, but as in the Spassky-Fischer game the black pieces are swift to gather on the kingside: **12.♗e2 ♕h4+ 13.g3 ♕e7 14.h4 ♘d7 15.♔f2 ♘e5 16.♔g2 f5** And Black was just comfortable.
May these examples inspire you to search for dynamic (counter-)play! ■

Hou Yifan and Mariya Muzychuk patiently wait as Ukrainian writer Yuriy Vinnichuk makes the first move in front of a calm still-life that, at the request of the Chinese delegation, replaced a mythological painting showing 'Cronus doing something to Amor'.

VITALIY HRABAR

Hou Yifan wins back her title

In line with expectations, Hou Yifan reclaimed the world title that she lost when she spurned the 2015 FIDE Women's Knockout Championship. In Lviv, the Chinese star beat Mariya Muzychuk 6-3. **OLENA BOYTSUN** reports from Ukraine. Additionally, Hou Yifan tells us in an exclusive interview that some of the grittiest fights were fought away from the chess board.

There are at least three Chinese restaurants in Lviv, the city in Western Ukraine that is also well-known for its chess school, which incubated 43 grandmasters for the world. Last March, thousands of local residents participated in chess activities to some degree, be it by eating chess-shaped chocolate bars in cosy coffee places or by playing the game with big outdoor pieces on the main Rynok Square. The reason was the Women's World Chess Championship between Hou Yifan and Mariya Muzychuk, which brought 'big chess' to Ukraine.

It all started when FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov came to Lviv in June 2015 to discuss the possibility to stage the match between Ukrainian Mariya Muzychuk and Hou Yifan from China in the native city of the reigning champion. Once the idea had transformed into an action plan, the Ukrainian chess community actively began to debate whether it is rational to spend so much money on one event at all. For example, in Lviv there is a strong regional 'chess for schools' programme, covering all schools in the city. If the budget of this programme were equal to the budget of a world chess match, one could think of a totally new level of chess development, not only in Lviv, but in the whole country.

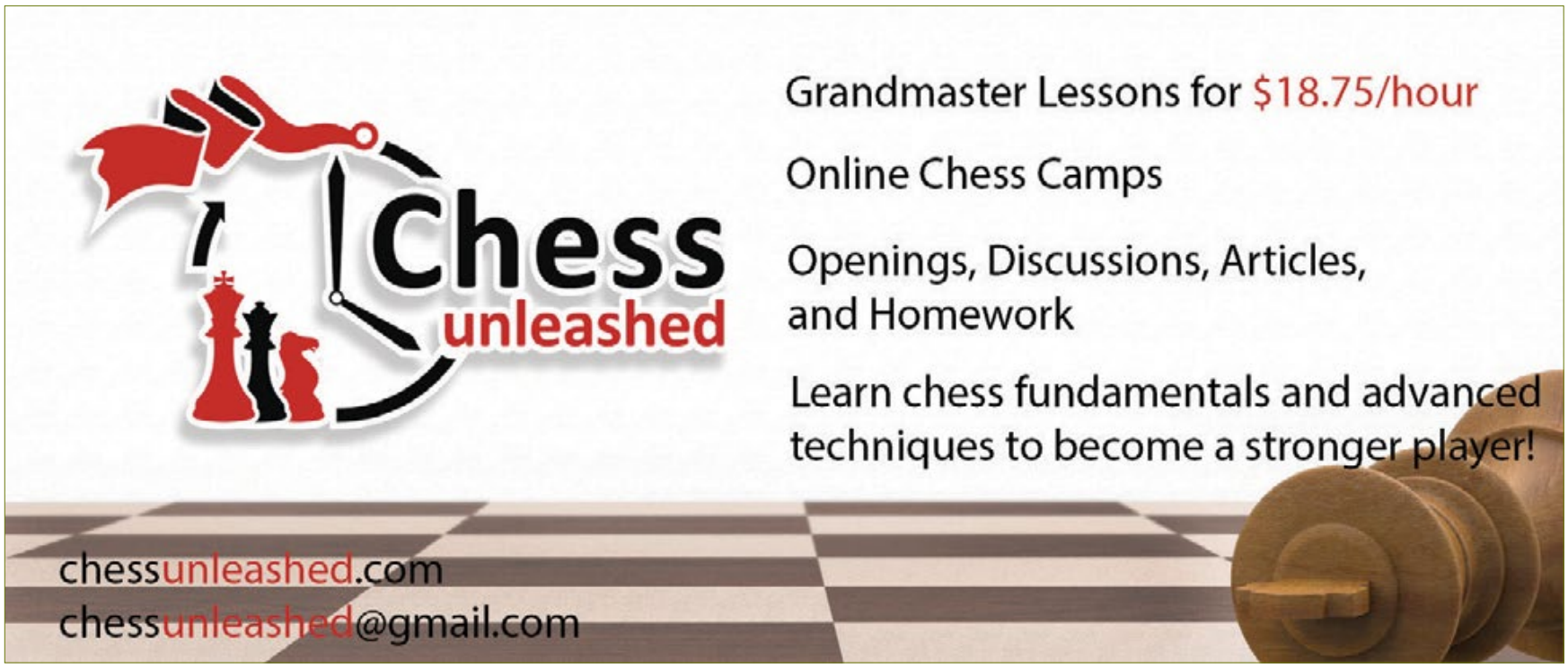
Another sensitive issue was linked to the fact that Ukraine is experiencing an ongoing military conflict in its Eastern regions. Then there is the annexation of Crimea, which is not recognized internationally. The state budget is largely balanced to cater for military needs, and to spend money on a sporting event, even of the highest calibre, was a question to discuss. But the strong desire to see 23-year-old Mariya Muzychuk – or 'our Marichka', as she is affectionately named by local fans – play in Ukraine, was bigger than any rationality.

> The strong desire to support 'our Marichka' outweighed everything else.

Ilyumzhinov gave another reason to stage the match – something like 'to prove that Lviv is a peaceful city and Ukraine is a peaceful country', but this sounded rather obscure, as Lviv is famous for its tourist attractions, just like Ukraine is well-known for not initiating military action against neighbouring countries. Anyway, the destiny of the event was decided when the President of Ukraine Petr Poroshenko signed the decree to organize the match in Lviv.

People understood that it would be difficult for Mariya to defend the title against the three-time champion, 22-year old Hou Yifan. But again, the strong desire to support 'our Marichka' outweighed everything else. Ukrainians did believe – and still do – that Mariya is an outstanding chess player, with a bright future and a glorious past. Everyone who knows Mariya personally can confirm that she is a nice person, very concentrated, very modest, but also fun and kind. Many famous Ukrainian personalities came to Lviv to support her and also to make the first move in the matches, for example the famous singer Svyatoslav Vakarchuk of the band 'Elza's Ocean' and the writer Yuriy Vinnichuk. With all these famous people Muzychuk deals the same as she deals with any fan or friend – with a kind, soft smile and respect. It was an additional responsibility for her at the match to be, as one calls it, 'a role model' – a position she didn't choose, but felt obliged to live up to. Her parents, Oleg and Natalia, helped a lot, serving as agents for all organizational negotiations, and her 26-year-old sister Anna (who, curiously, is generally seen as the stronger player of the two sisters – ed.) was a member of her chess team, helping to get her prepared for the match. The team also included seconds GMs Pavel Eljanov and Yury Kryvoruchko.

During the closing ceremony, FIDE Deputy President Georgios Makropoulos, who visited the match in the position of 'acting FIDE President', acknowledged that both participants were not only strong chess players,



but also 'good personalities', and that FIDE was proud that they were among the Women's World champions. The winner, Hou Yifan, became the champion for the fourth time. She was crowned with a Ukrainian crown, hand-made as a head wreath by a traditional folk method from the 18th century.

The Chinese delegation probably didn't have a clear idea of what life in Ukraine would be like, but at the end they seemed to be comfortable with any household situations. While Mariya didn't have any special requirements for the organization of the match, the team of Hou Yifan had more. The request that was most widely distributed by the press was their wish to change a picture in the playing hall. They preferred a calm still-life over a classical mythological-themed 'Cronus does something to Amor' painting that was hanging there. In this painting, an unknown artist had indeed left room for the imagination, and one doesn't want to get distracted while playing an important match.

But everyone involved in the chess world would understand that another request – to delay the live transmission of the games for 30 minutes – was much more important. The delay is meant to be an anti-cheating measure, but these delays are usually not very effective and they affect the spectators a lot (or, one could say – the rights of spectators). As a member of Muzychuk's team, GM Pavel Eljanov recalls that the issue was debated, as it wasn't in the contract that the chess players had signed. One day before the start of the match a positive decision on the dispute was taken by the acting FIDE President Georgios Makropoulos, and although the Ukrainian side still tried to resist, the 30-minute delay for moves was implemented, so that even the members of the press centre in the same building where the match was played, wouldn't know the actual status of the game.

VITALIY HRABAR

Mariya Muzychuk and Hou Yifan at one of the press conferences. The Chinese World Champion left Lviv with mixed feelings. 'This was just a match I wanted to finish.'

During the match, more than 180 Ukrainian and international journalists were accredited, 50 of them being photo and video correspondents. More than 1000 spectators visited the Pototsky Palace, a beautiful centrally-located historical building, where the match was held, and this number would have been much higher if the organizers had not had to regulate the attendance due to the limited capacity of the halls.

The games were transmitted live – well, 'half-an-hour' fresh – on the official website and also at the TV channel 'Sport 1'. Nevertheless Hou Yifan could feel comfortable, just walking the streets of Lviv from the hotel to the playing hall, as she usually did, politely refusing to use the limousine, provided by the organizers.

The result of the match, 6-3 in favour of Hou Yifan, hides the intensity of the event. The match lasted for 17 days, during which nine games were played. The longest game was the 7th round, which lasted for five hours and 81 moves, but the most emotional one was the last game, since Mariya needed to win it in order for the match to continue. As happens so often with games with such stakes, it actually ended in a loss.

Hou Yifan did not lose a single game. At one of the press conferences, Mariya Muzychuk mentioned that she had the best team in the world, because if anyone have told her before the match that she would get such stable positions after the opening, she would not have believed it. Indeed, preparation was important, starting from the first game, when Hou Yifan chose 1...e5, which she had started playing only a year ago or so. The first game was drawn, but the second one brought a win for the experienced Chinese player, which you will find, annotated by herself, further on. The next three games were drawn, and it was the sixth game that proved crucial. On several moves the position called for the aggressive pawn push f6, which would have offered Mariya good chances, but instead the gap only grew when she lost that game. The two next games, long and exhausting, were draws. And finally there came the ninth game, which went to a complicated endgame, in which Hou Yifan was more precise and clinched the match.

The prize fund of 200,000 euros was distributed 60/40, with 120,000 euros going to the winner. Marketing experts could try to calculate what the Lviv region gained or will gain from this investment, but the truth is that the event felt right, and you cannot estimate feelings with money. It was a well-organized, sweet, bright, warm, kind of 'home-made' event for many chess fans in Ukraine and worldwide.

‘For me a knockout tournament is not a real World Championship’

Last year, Hou Yifan skipped the FIDE Knockout World Championship tournament in Sochi, because she had already agreed to play the Hawaii Open, and temporarily lost her world title. After her win over Mariya Muzychuk, the Chinese champion spoke freely to us about losing and winning back the title and her plans for the near future – in which women’s events may play only a minor role.

‘The Hawaii organizers had already talked to me a year before and we had come to an agreement. Then FIDE informed me that they planned to change the dates of the knockout tournament and that this might clash with Hawaii. They said Hawaii was just a tournament and that people would understand if I cancelled it. That this had been done before. But for me this is not acceptable. I feel that if you agree to play a tournament, you should play, whatever the situation is. What’s more, at this point I was already thinking of giving up playing in the knockout system. I already felt this way in 2012, but then for some reason I played anyway, but my performance was quite poor. So for these two reasons I didn’t play in the knockout system last year.

‘In fact I didn’t feel like giving up the title or that it was a pity, because to me this is not a real world championship. You can see that in recent years the one who won the knockout championship is not the strongest player, objectively speaking. Of course they are quite good players, but not the best. The top-rated woman normally didn’t win the knockout system. Anything can happen; it may turn on one game. To my mind, a match is fairer, and the appropriate format for the title fight. I don’t think you should call the knockout tournament the World Championship. It would be better to call it, just as with the men, the World Cup. In which you give more players chances to play in a top field and to qualify for a subsequent stage.

‘Of course I had to be full of confidence before this match. I hoped I could give a good performance and win the title back. I didn’t expect too many difficulties. I had just played Wijk aan Zee, which is a tough tournament, and for me the match was not as strong. When Mariya Muzychuk won the knockout championship, I was a bit surprised, especially since there is her sister Anna, who was higher rated than her at the time and who has been playing top tournaments for many years. I didn’t think about this match seriously for a long time. In fact, it was only after my exhibition match in Chili, that I seriously started my preparations... just two weeks before the first game.

‘Before coming to Lviv, I already expected there could be some problems that I would need to conquer besides the chess board. But I could not have expected that it would be so bad. When I heard that the match was going to be held in Lviv, I realized that there could be tiny disadvantages, like the time difference, different food. As is the case when you play other tournaments in Europe, which I kind of have already got used to. But there already had been some issues. Originally, the match was to be held last October. Then, during the Women’s World Team Championship in Chengdu, where I was not playing, my opponent said to FIDE that she already had commitments in October and asked if the match could be postponed till March. And FIDE agreed without asking me. They just informed me. Which disturbed my plans. This I still could understand in some way, but then before the venue was decided on, China also had some potential sponsors who were interested in holding the match. When FIDE and the Ukrainian organizers heard about this, they decided to increase the prize-money from the minimum 200,000 euros to 300,000 euros. A big increase, and there were no Chinese sponsors that wanted to compete with this. So Ukraine

VITALIY HRABAR

Hou Yifan was crowned World Champion for the fourth time with a Ukrainian crown, hand-made as a head wreath by a traditionnal folk method from the 18th century.

got the right to hold the match, but after a month or so I received the contract and the prize-money was 200,000 euros. This caused me to become a bit worried for this match. It showed they really wanted to have this match. And why? Because it is her home town, her home country. Of course I am not saying anything against the organization, I understand that the economic situation in Ukraine is not so rosy. I spoke to the Mayor and he was really nice and he wanted to have this match in Lviv. But there was also a lot of opposition from people who felt that this was a waste of money. So I really appreciated their efforts, but...

'You may have heard from the Ukrainians that we had a few requests related to the match. For instance, she played in the Ukrainian championship at the end of 2015 and her games remain unpublished till now. All games from this championship have been published, except for hers. This is not a big deal for me, but it is not fair. Nobody has done this before, no top player in either men's or women's chess has ever done this. You should not have such exceptions. This is a national championship, not some small tournament. It is weird that only her games were not published. With all these issues coming together it made me feel worried, especially as we were playing in Ukraine.

'That's why we had some requests to make sure that the match would be held under completely fair conditions. There were one or two that really mattered to us. One was delaying the transmission of the games by 30 minutes and the other was about cutting radio signals. That's what my federation asked for. They also asked for some other things, but those were minor issues I did not care about so much.

'And we proposed this before I signed the contract, meaning that if FIDE didn't accept this, I'd probably not play the match. All these issues were discussed much earlier, even before I agreed to play in Ukraine. And FIDE agreed and I decided to play. And I believe this doesn't only benefit me, but also my opponent. I wasn't asking for something that would be to my advantage. I don't know when FIDE discussed this with the Ukrainians, but everything was only solved at the last moment. For instance, my opponent didn't agree on the delay at all, but because I only agreed to play under this condition...

'But this was only one thing. During the first half of the match, every day I would receive some complaint that was directly aimed at me personally. Which really made me unhappy, and it was disturbing. Minor issues, you cannot imagine. For example after Game 2 or 3, they said I could not wear my jeans and my sports shoes to the games. They said it was written in the contract. Then the chief arbiter read the contract carefully and told them that there was nothing there. Not a single word. They had even raised this issue with my trainer. And he came to tell me that I could not wear my jeans and sports shoes in the playing hall anymore. And then the arbiter became very angry and said these things shouldn't go through the

opponent's team's trainer. I'd be happy to wear something more formal, but the point was that the temperature in the playing hall was quite low. In fact during the last days I got a quite serious cold.

'And there were other such minor things. You may have noticed that in Wijk aan Zee I brought this small bottle with purple stuff, some kind of oil, to the game. I brought it for two reasons. It makes you fresh or clear, and it protects you against certain insects. After the fourth game there was a press conference and some journalists were curious what it was and I explained it and everything was fine. And then before the next game I heard that my opponent had written a letter to the arbiter that it disturbed her and that I should not bring it anymore. In itself I can understand this, but she proposed it after the fourth game. But during the first four games I didn't open it even once! If they had watched the video, they could have seen this. All these games were not very long, so I was still fresh and didn't need it. And she said she didn't like the smell. But she had not had a single chance to know what the smell was! The arbiter advised me not to bring it and I told her, just to avoid any further trouble, that I would no longer bring it.

'These things can be more disturbing than chess issues. So you not only have to play well but you also have to be ready for the psychological aspects and I am very happy that my team and I managed to handle this successfully. This was just a match I wanted to finish. There are many stronger tournaments, bigger challenges in the future where I can try myself. To be a better player.

'I hope that in the future I will be able to play more top events like Wijk aan Zee, events on the elite level. Not like now, when I am just a participant. I want to compete for the top places. Now my games may have an effect on someone else's tournament, but I want to play for myself. This is my main aim for the near future. Women's chess will only be part of what I am doing. During the FIDE Presidential Board meeting in Moscow, they discussed a proposal that I wrote together with my federation to seriously consider to change the women's system for the title. We feel it would be reasonable if it were the same as the men's system. It's kind of weird if in one sport the men's and women's championships are different. Which would mean that the knockout championship would become the World Cup. Unfortunately, my proposal was rejected.

'I will no longer play women's competitions as much as I do now. Nor will I play in the Grand Prix. I mean, I can't be the challenger all the time because I win the Grand Prix. And I intend not to play in the knockout tournament either. Which would leave me more time to concentrate on top-level competitions, which is more important for me. More important even than the Women's World Championship.'

(Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam)

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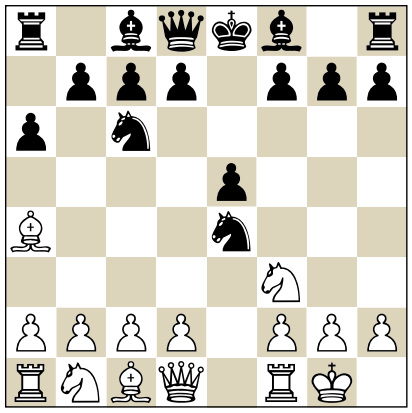
NOTES BY
Hou Yifan

RL 29.8 – C83
Hou Yifan
Mariya Muzychuk
Lviv 2016 (2)

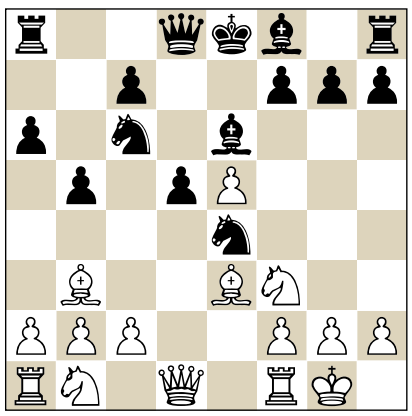
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4



My opponent started playing the Open Spanish a year ago, and it is one of her main openings now. You can be sure we didn't miss it during our home preparation.

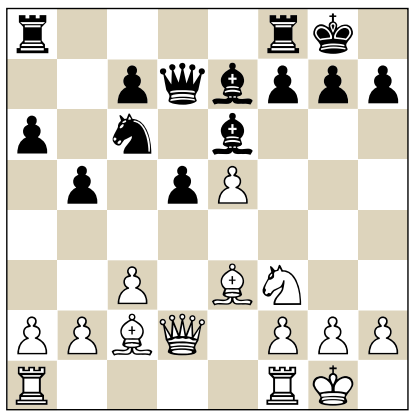
6.d4 b5 7.♗b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♗e6 9.♗e3

An unusual move for me if you look at my previous games, but not a real surprise, since it is one of the main lines nowadays. The other two possibilities, 9.♘bd2 and 9.c3, were tried later on in the match, but in both games White did not get anything out of the opening.



9...♗e7 10.c3 0-0 11.♘bd2 ♕d7 12.♗c2 In the game Adams-Muzychuk, Baku World Cup 2015, Michael tried 12.♖e1 ♘xd2 13.♗xd2 ♖ad8, but after a few more moves Black managed to equalize without much difficulty.

12...♘xd2 13.♕xd2

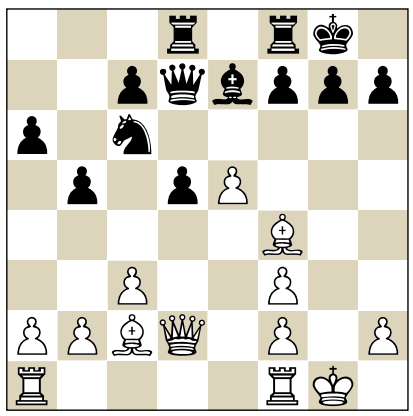


13...♗g4 Up to this point, both of us had played quite fast and I assumed this was her preparation, as the position had arisen once before in the game Giri-Pruijssers, Amsterdam 2015, in which, after 13...♘a5, White went 14.♘d4!, when White can create an attack on the kingside after exchanging on e6.

14.♗f4 An interesting novelty, which may seem a bit aggressive to try in a match, as it exposes the white king, but with the dark-squared bishop on g3 it is relatively safe.

The more reasonable option seems to be 14.♕d3 g6 15.♗f4 ♗f5, but it will be hard for White to achieve anything. After the light-squared bishop has been exchanged, the black c6-knight will go to e6 via d8 to help push the d-pawn in the future.

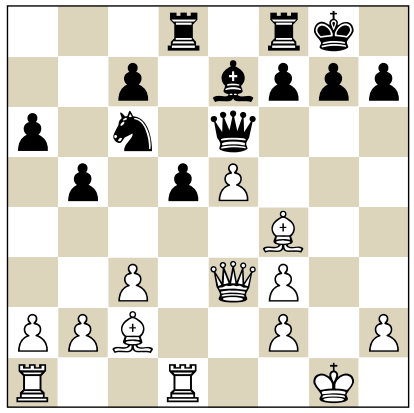
14...♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♖ad8



16.♖fd1 Here I spent half an hour to come up with a plan. The most natural choice appeared to be 16.♖ad1 (and objectively speaking it might be the best one!) 16...♖fe8 (16...♕e6 makes no sense, since it only provokes the rook to go to e1: 17.♖fe1; and after 16...♘a5 17.b3 c5? White gets a clear advantage with 18.c4!) 17.♖fe1 ♗f8, with the idea of ...g6 and ...♗g7 in order to prevent White's f5, as the knight on c6 is active enough to jump to e7 at any time. But the disadvantage of 16.♖ad1 is that the a4 push is no longer a threat.

16...♕e6 17.♕e3

The most natural move, but not the best one due to the very subtle point that Black can gain a tempo by playing ...♘a5. I also considered 17.♕e2, but I didn't like the idea that Black's bishop goes to c5: 17...♗c5 (17...♘a5 is not good, because ...♘c4 is not an immediate threat and this allows White enough time to prepare the f4-f5 push with 18.♗g3) 18.♗g3 g6, with the idea of ...f6.



17...♖d7?!

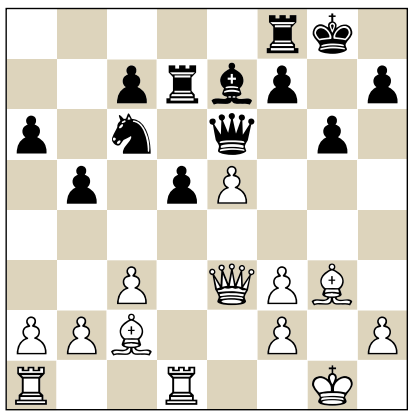
A dubious move in this critical position. Clearly Black's idea is to vacate the d8-square for manoeuvres like ...♘d8-e6, or ...♖fd8 to protect the d5-pawn, or even ...♗d8 and ...♘e7 at some specific point.

Objectively speaking, all these plans are a bit slow. Black should have jumped at the right moment to create counterplay with 17...♘a5 18.b3 (with a tempo up, 18.♕e2 ♘c4 is already a different story) 18...c5 19.♗g3 (after 19.a4 c4! is easy to miss!) 19...♘c6 20.f4 f5, and with this pawn structure on the fifth rank this is simply a better version of a blockade for Black, as ...d4 is coming.

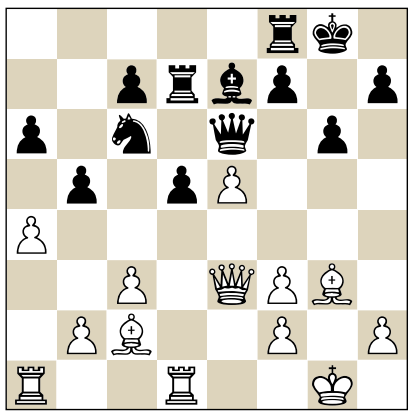
18.♗g3

One of the main ideas of this move is to push f4-f5, especially when there's a piece on e6.

18...g6



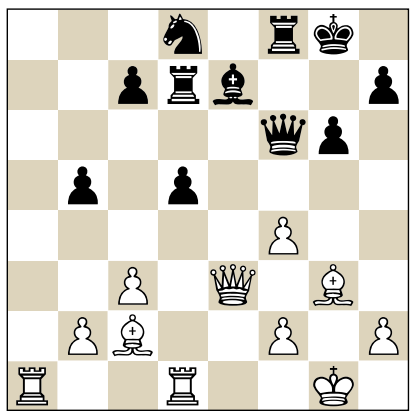
19.a4 The second critical moment of this game. Now there are only two possible ways to improve the position, by breaking through either on the f-file or on the a-file. Of course, the ideal way is to combine both, as one weakness normally cannot lead to a win. You need to create another one, but here White needs to be more precise: 19.f4! f6 20.exf6 ♕xf6 21.♗b3 ♖fd8 22.♖e1! (and this is tricky business for Black, as her pieces are lacking coordination. Bad is 22.♖xd5? ♖xd5 23.♖d1 ♕f5 24.♕f3 ♘b4! – an invisible move! – 25.cxb4 c6, and the position is equal).



19...♘d8

Too passive. Obviously, the move was 19...b4! 20.f4 (20.a5!? is also quite unpleasant for Black) 20...f6 21.exf6 ♕xe3! 22.fxe3 ♗xf6. The inclusion of a4 and ...b4 gives Black some counterplay, although she has to be very precise: 23.♗b3 ♖fd8 24.e4 (not the best, but it looked the most attractive to me during the game) 24...bxc3 25.bxc3 ♗xc3 26.♖ac1 ♘d4!, and this is the move I had missed in my earlier calculations.

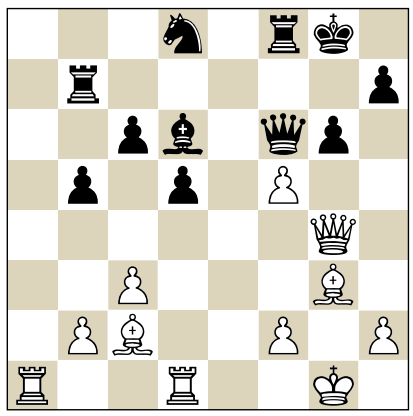
20.axb5 axb5 21.f4 f6 22.exf6 ♕xf6



23.♕e2!

I started by checking 23.♖a7, with the prophylactic idea to prevent ...c6 in order to attack the d5-pawn with the powerful light-squared bishop. The variation continues 23...♘e6 24.♖a6 ♗d6, and seeing this move I realized that when the two minor pieces got involved in the game, the position would be unclear. Then I had a sudden idea: I should probably go for f5 to restrain the passive knight, while at the same time freeing the 'temporarily bad bishop'. Then this natural queen manoeuvre came on the board.

23...c6 24.♕g4 ♖b7 25.f5 ♗d6

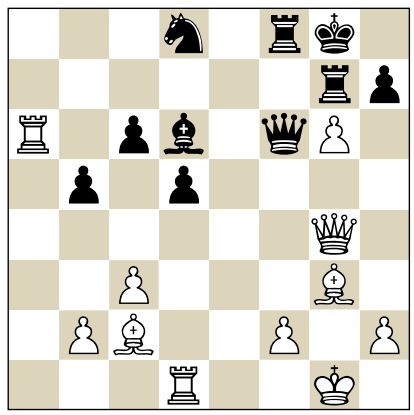


26.♖a6 The decisive moment of the game. Again it proved that the most aggressive move is not always the best one.

Obviously, White should be thinking about defending the f2 weakness. 26.♖d2 will run into 26...♘f7 27.fxg6 ♘e5! (the point) 28.♗xe5 ♕xe5 29.gxh7+ ♔h8, and Black will at least hold the game with sufficient compensation, as all her pieces are joining the attack now.

But the best move is 26.♖f1!. The same idea, but a stronger square, since it supports f4: 26...♗xg3 (or 26...♘f7 27.fxg6 ♘e5 28.♗xe5 ♗xe5 29.f4, and White is winning) 27.fxg3, and this is already very difficult for Black.

26...♖g7 27.fxg6



27...♗c5 Missing the final chance of the game. After 27...♗xg3 28.♕xg3 ♕e6! the game continues, as the c6/d5 pawn chain is protected and we can see the consequences of the two white rooks not being well connected.

28.♔g2

White has a winning position: an extra pawn plus a pair of active bishops and the threat of taking on d5. Black's position is hopeless.

28...hxg6

Or 28...♕e7 29.♖d2, with the idea of ♖e2 and ♗e5, and finally the dark-squared bishop claims a leading part in the battle.

29.♖xd5 ♗xf2 30.♗b3 ♘e6 31.♖d6 ♗c5 32.♕xe6+

Black resigned. ■

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
Hou Yifan	IGM	CHN	2673	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	.	6	2679
Mariya Muzychuk	IGM	UKR	2554	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	.	3	2548

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Shocking moves

At some point, everyone in chess has heard the phrase, 'play against the pieces, not your opponent'. While there is some objective truth in this dictum, **Parimarjan Negi** argues that understanding your opponent's psychology is very important if you want to 'shock' him and pose uncomfortable challenges.

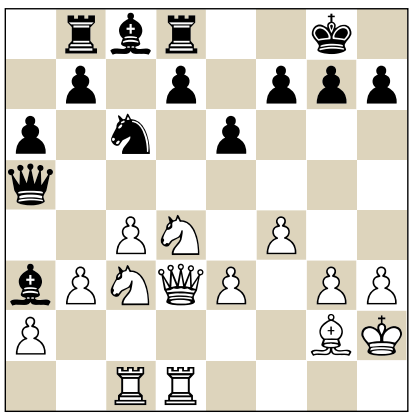
One way to unbalance your opponent is to shock him by suddenly changing the direction of the game, especially when he seems to feel comfortable with the way things are going. I don't mean just surprising him with an unexpected move – you can do that easily enough by playing a bad move. I mean changing the very nature of the game and putting paid to all expectations your opponent had for the future. It can be just one move – or even a series of moves that achieves this objective.

The idea behind it is simple – many players find it hard to mentally adjust to a new situation. Imagine a position in which your opponent expects a long game with little risk, and slightly better chances. Perhaps you can make an objectively risky move that dramatically alters the situation. As a result, your opponent might be strategically or materially much better, but you have taken the initiative and now he is on the defensive. The sudden shift can be enough by itself to provoke your opponent into going wrong.

Of course, you should not try to shock your opponent all the time or in all situations (especially if you do not need to). As a guideline, you can look for the following markers:

- Your opponent should be satisfied with the way the game is going for him and have a clear plan. If he seems unhappy, then there is no real need to change the nature of the game.
- Your move / plan alters the type of situation in the game. Maybe you have a passive position and sacrifice some material to get an initiative.

In fact, sacrifices are the most common shockers.



Mamedyarov-Lenderman
Doha 2015
position after 21...♗a3

Both players have been shuffling their pieces around without really creating any play. Now Mamedyarov dramatically alters the nature of the game, although objectively his move is definitely not the best.

22.♗xc6

A more natural move would have been 22.♖b1, but this doesn't set Black any problems. After the rook steps aside Black can choose between a few different solid moves. He can even play ...♗e7 or ...♗b4, and then ...♗e7. Or he can do something more active with 22...♘xd4!? 23.exd4 (23.♕xd4 ♗c5 doesn't look ideal for White) 23...d5! 24.cxd5 ♗b4 25.♘e2 exd5, and Black is very comfortable. Let us now consider the two guidelines I mentioned above. The text move certainly meets the first of the criteria – if White just continues normally, Black will clearly have many different ways to continue, none of which seemed particularly appealing to Mamedyarov's style of play. Now let us look further and see if Mamedyarov's move meets the second criterion.

22...♗xc1?

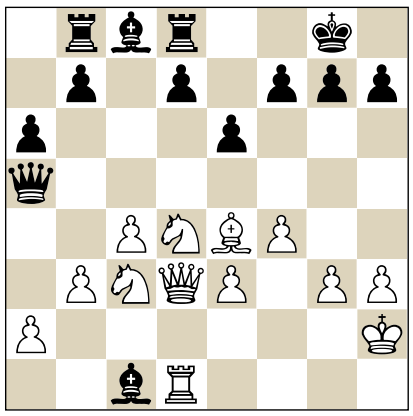
The sudden need to calculate variations already causes a strong GM like Lenderman to lose his way. 22...♗xc1 seems to be perfectly fine for Black – in most variations, the game changes drastically, but Black seems to be in the game. But it is a bad move because Black could have done something much stronger.

The big problem with Mamedyarov's move was 22...dxc6!, only it required Black to find a brilliant but computer-like idea: 23.♘xc6 ♖xd3 24.♘xa5 ♖d7!!, and amazingly this solves

Black's problems on the d-file, and White has no way to deal with both the 25...♗b4 threat and the hanging rook. Mamedyarov clearly hadn't seen this, or he would never have gone for 22.♗xc6 – too big a gamble. Therefore, when applying our two guidelines, we should not consider the move 22...dxc6 at all. It is always possible to miscalculate – but your decision about which move to choose can only be based on the lines that you do calculate.

23.♗e4

Now we can consider Point 2. White has given up an exchange, and now, according to the engine, has a worse position. Yet, notice the dramatic difference compared to how the situation was just two moves ago! After 21...♗a3, White had only one move to save material, 22.♖b1, whereas Black could have played many different moves to maintain a nice and solid position. Now, Black needs to make precise defensive decisions, while White definitely has many exciting options with ♗xh7+ – ♘e4, etc. It is impossible to calculate what is happening here – I am sure even an attacking genius like Mamedyarov did not calculate the lines in great depth, but he probably saw a few ideas and decided to trust his intuition. And he probably also realized that Lenderman would feel much more uncomfortable here than after 22.♖b1. Quite enough reason to go for it.

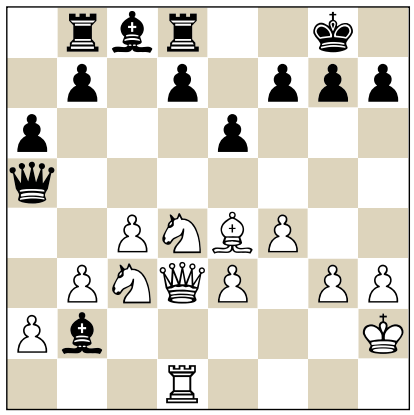


23...♗b2 The natural move, but now Mamedyarov throws in the second shock bomb.

The best defensive option was 23...♗a3!, but it was hard to foresee

> 'The idea behind it is simple – many players find it hard to mentally adjust to a new situation.'

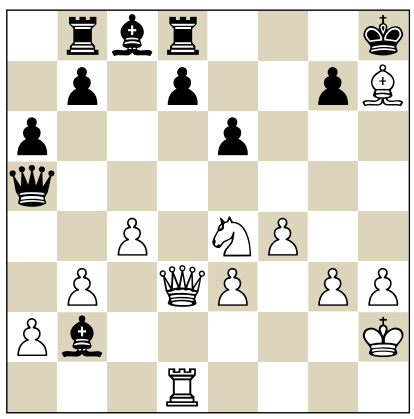
the amazing idea that happened in the game. But even here, the situation remains complex after 24.♗xh7+ ♔f8. Now 25.♘xe6+ could be considered, although it probably won't work. But 25.♘e4 and 25.f5 both lead to interesting complications, while a simple move like 25.♗e4 maintains tension as well. The absolute truth may be that Black is better – but that does not matter in a practical game at all.



24.♘xe6!! fxe6 25.♗xh7+ ♔h8

Or 25...♔f8 26.♕d6+ ♔f7 27.♘e4! ♗f6 28.♘g5+ ♗xg5 29.fxg5, and ♖f1 mates.

26.♘e4



An amazing position. Black is completely on the edge, and having just been hit by two extreme sacrifices, Lenderman was too shocked to find the precise defence to draw.

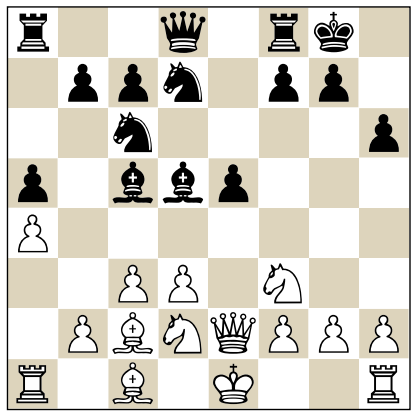
26...♖f8?

26...♗f6! with the idea of ...d5 was called for: 27.♘xf6 gxf6 28.♕g6 ♖f8! 29.♕h6 ♖f7, and White probably has no more than a perpetual. But this is of course not easy to foresee in a game.

27.♗g6! ♔g8 28.♕e2 ♗f6 29.c5

Absolute domination. Black was mated soon after.

But sacrifices are by no means the only way to 'shock' your opponent. The direction of the game can also be dramatically altered by an unexpected change of plan.



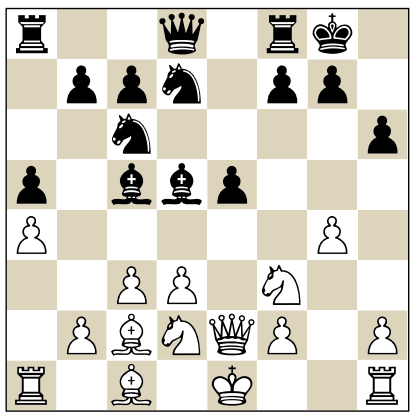
Sadler-Adair
Birmingham 2016
position after 11...♘d7

Black is doing quite well out of the opening. He is better developed, has a better centre, and after 12.0-0 f5, White will find it hard to find nice squares to finish his development. White can of course continue solidly, and keep the balance, but that is not ideal, as Black will face few challenging decisions. So the first guideline is definitely met here. Black must have been feeling very comfortable and smug about his position until...

12.g4!

From an engine's perspective, this isn't a great move, although Stockfish can be convinced with a little thinking and prodding that White isn't really worse here either. But consider the effect of such a move. g4-g5 ideas are always a bit surprising when they happen – but here – with White's king still in

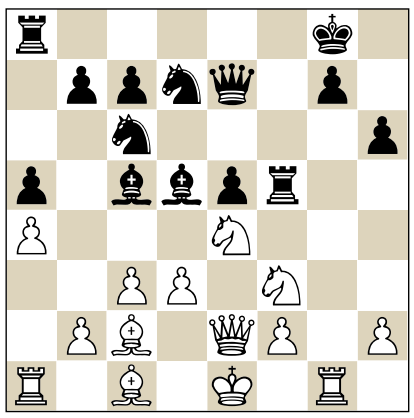
the centre, and White's apparent lack of development, it feels particularly shocking. Suddenly, Black is forced to make a very crucial decision instead of just lounging around and feeling happy about his position. Should he play ...f5? It does not have the same appeal anymore because it gives White the perfect square on e4 for his knight. Should he instead try to exploit White's lack of development? Should he ignore g4 completely – after all, how dangerous can g5 be? You see, these questions alone already completely justify 12.g4, and the second point of the guideline has been met. In the game, Black just remained completely confused between all these alternatives, and collapsed surprisingly fast.



12...♘f6

Now White's idea is justified.

12...f5! was indeed the best move, though after 13.gxf5 ♖xf5 14.♘e4 Black needs to find some very precise lines: 14...♕e7! 15.♖g1



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

15...♖xf3! (15...♖af8 16.♖g3 looks just nice for White, as he can go ♗e3 and 0-0-0. The computer still thinks Black is OK, but in practice this does not look so pleasant) 16.♕xf3 ♖f8 17.♕h3 ♗xe4 18.♗xh6 ♗xf2+ 19.♔e2 ♗f5!, and Black seems to be doing fine in this mess.

13.♖g1

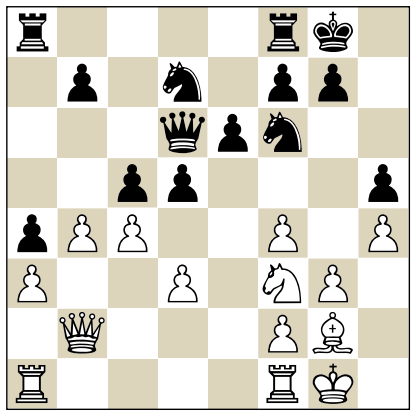
This puts even more pressure on Black, and he just couldn't take it anymore.

13...♗xf3 14.♘xf3 ♖e8 15.g5 hxg5 16.♗xg5 ♕d6 17.0-0-0 ♕e6 18.♘d2 ♗f8 19.♕f3 ♘h7 20.♗b3 ♕d7 21.♘e4 ♘d8 22.d4

And very soon, it was all over.

Both these games had a decidedly attacking theme. It is, admittedly, easier to change the direction of the game by suddenly going on the offensive. But there are subtler ways that have a similar effect.

The next game was played in the last round of an open event in New Delhi. I was a 12-year-old kid who needed to win against a very solid Indian IM to make a Grandmaster norm.



Sundararajan-Negi
New Delhi 2006
position after 18.a3

It had been a rather slow game so far. White had played an off-beat variation and maintained a slightly more pleasant position throughout the game. As a 12-year-old, playing to win with black, this was far from ideal for me. So finally I decided to take matters in my own hands, and change the way the game was going:

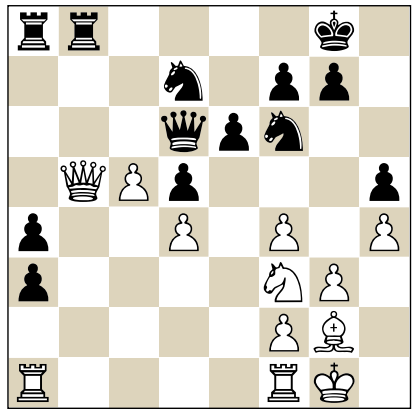
18...b5!?

I do not know how good this move is. I remember it as a brilliant move, but looking at the position objectively, I see now that it was not the move, but the effect which it had on White that was critical. For the first time in the game I started playing actively, and it was time for him to calculate some variations.

19.d4

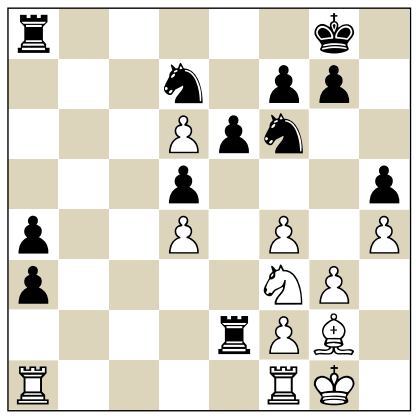
I have to admit that it is very hard to not play a pretty move like this after you have seen it! But, concretely, this gives the initiative to Black. Instead, White could have had a solid position by making simple decisions – like ♘e5, or cxb5. Then Black would still have needed to show a way to equality.

19...cxb4 20.c5 bxa3! 21.♕xb5 ♖fb8!



Probably the move my opponent had missed. I had not considered 19.d4 when I played 18...b5, so I certainly could not have anticipated this. But I knew I did not like the way the game was going, and 18...b5 was a good attempt at changing that. That is all you can hope to do – after that, it is a matter of taking your chances as they come along.

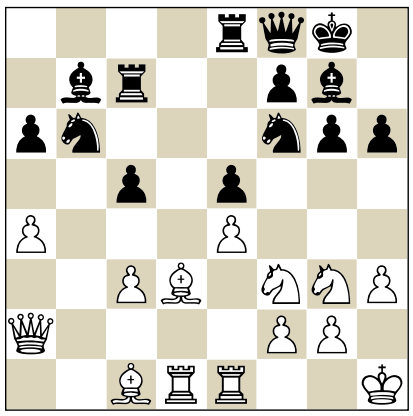
22.♕e2 If 22.♕d3 ♖b3!. **22...♖b2! 23.cxd6 ♖xe2**



And suddenly Black has a more pleasant endgame. This is nowhere near

winning and White had chances to save the game, but the position had changed dramatically, and White could not get used to the new reality...
24.♖xa3 ♖b2 25.f5 exf5 26.♘e5 ♘b6 27.♖c1 ♖d8 28.♘c6 ♖xd6
And I won soon after.

Finally, a word of caution. I can attest from many games of my own that it is tempting to 'shock' your opponent with some nice idea when there is no real need to do so. You should only do it if you are able to make him less comfortable than he was. In the next game I was a much older and established Grandmaster. Unfortunately, my intuition for these things only seems to have deteriorated over the years.

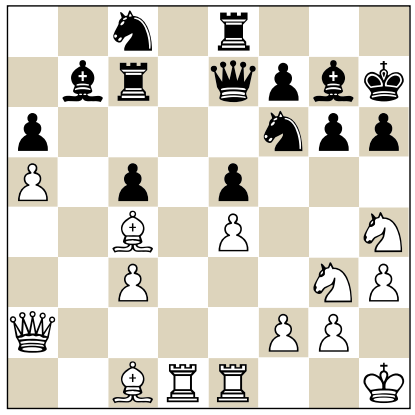


Negi-Sasikiran
New Delhi 2011
position after 25...♘b6

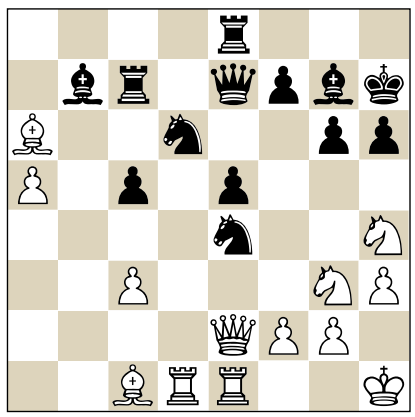
26.♘h4
The immediate threat is 27.♘xg6, but that can be easily parried. My idea was based on some very concrete lines, in particular 26.a5 ♘c8 27.♗c4, when 27...♘d6 is very comfortable for Black. After including 26.♘h4 ♔h7, 28...♘d6 would be impossible (after 27.a5 ♘c8 28.♗c4) because of 29.♖xd6 and 30.♗xf7. I was also inspired by eventually being able to plonk my knight on f5 – a pretty unexpected idea that I once used to win a brilliant game. This definitely meets the second guideline – it is quite shocking for Black indeed, and the position can change dramatically. But let us move back for a moment and consider the situation before 26.♘h4. It does not take long to realize that White has a very pleasant positional edge. The open b-file seems to favour White, while the c4- and d5-squares are obvious holes. In addition, the black bishop on g7 is out of the game – and White could use his bishop to target stuff on the queenside. There are many ways to continue

'A good lesson here is: if you choose one plan, you should at least stick with it, rather than being confused by different ideas!'

with this plan – but some combination of a5, ♘d2-♘c4, ♗e3 etc. seems very appealing to White indeed. So Black was suffering here, and with my impetuous decision I made his life a lot easier. He probably welcomed the change in direction wholeheartedly.
Instead, 26.a5 ♘c8 27.♘d2! ♘d6 28.♘c4 ♘xc4 29.♗xc4 is very, very pleasant for White.
26...♔h7 27.a5 ♘c8 28.♗c4 ♕e7
Just improving his position. What is the knight doing on h4? I guess the only justification now was 20.♘f5, because I had misplaced all my pieces and it might have at least served some shock value. It is true that ♘f5 was an idea I was considering already when playing 26.♘h4, but then I started calculating, only without coming up with any definite conclusions. So I panicked and tried to force some kind of equality, and ended up with a very bad position. A good lesson here is: if you choose one plan, you should at least stick with it, rather than being confused by different ideas!



29.♕e2?
Instead, 29.♘gf5 gxf5 30.♘xf5 ♕f8 31.f3 is actually decent compensation for White, although there is no immediate danger for Black and he should be fine after 31...♘h5 or one of the many other possible moves.
29...♘d6 30.♗xa6 ♘fxe4



An easy miscalculation. Now my position is just bad, and I did not put up much resistance in the remainder of the game.

Conclusion
Surprising your opponent with an unexpected plan can be a great way to take the initiative in a game. But you have to be careful and ensure that the change in the game favours you. It is hard to boil this down to an exact set of conditions, but the two useful guidelines I mentioned above can serve as useful templates. In even simpler terms – only do this if for some reason you aren't happy with the way things are going in the position. ■

Walkabout

Two years ago I found myself, somewhat implausibly, in the 19th century gold-rush town of Ballarat, a couple of hours' drive from Melbourne. The ostensible reason for this visit was to address a meeting of the Oceania Chess Confederation. Absurdly naïve as this may now sound, I imagined, in those days of innocence, that lobbying Delegates might affect the outcome of the 2014 FIDE Presidential Election. The incumbent FIDE pornocracy was represented by the ubiquitous Geoffrey Borg, who, although cordial, seemed greatly irked by my presence. Having taken the trouble to traverse half the globe, and despite being in Ballarat for several days prior to the gathering, Geoffrey suddenly decided he had to catch an early flight. To facilitate this, he requested to address the representatives in advance – a wish that was duly granted. It is, of course, conceivable that Geoffrey had a legitimate reason for his abrupt departure. But the cynical view is that it was far more likely that he didn't want his electoral pitch contradicted; the eyebrow-raising payments from his U.A.E.-based Global Chess queried; and his embarrassing position as a beneficiary on the notorious AGON Memorandum challenged. Whether my subsequent presentation swayed any opinions is hard to say, but recent discussions with those privy to regional voting intentions, support the conjecture that, as Kirsan swept to ineluctable victory, Oceania was the only continent which Garry Kasparov carried, albeit narrowly.

A positive, incidental legacy of that brief political sojourn to the State of Victoria was that it marked the beginning of my friendship with local organiser Kevin Perrin, who had kindly offered to host me for the weekend. The Ballarat Begonia Open was then in its 48th year and Kevin, remarkably, had been involved in every edition – initially as a schoolboy participant, but later as an arbiter, treasurer and everything else! Notwithstanding the fact I had accidentally vandalised his home while struggling with the kitchen blinds, he generously and forgivingly proposed that I return in 2016 as the star player for the 50th anniversary.

Kevin's offer ensured the long trip to Australia was financially viable, but it was also clear that I was in no danger of becoming rich from a solitary, relatively short engagement. How much better it would be if I could tag on a few exhibitions, or perhaps even a tournament? Alas, I was unable to agree terms for the one, proximate competition in the calendar – the Doeberl Cup in Canberra. However, negotiations for the simuls and lectures were much more fruitful. I had been advised not to bother with Perth, the most isolated major city on the planet, but, being a contrarian, I ignored that counsel. How right I was! David Ellis, the President of the Western Australia Chess Association, eagerly engaged me, poignantly remarking that they hadn't seen a foreign grandmaster since the late spherical comedian Eduard Gufeld had visited three decades earlier. It thus became my first port of call.

I was billeted at the spacious and comfortable home, replete with grand piano, of Gordon Dunlop – a very nice man, but with an unfortunate addiction to correspondence chess. How this utterly futile, electricity-wasting discipline has crawled into the 21st century is beyond comprehension. But I must not interrupt the narrative: the twitching corpse of that pseudo-sport will be the subject of a later article...

There are only about 150 regular club members in Perth, but a good many of them, plus several new or lapsed players, descended upon the Rhein-Donau Club for the occasion. In contrast to many typical events at the 58 year-old German cultural centre, there was not a dirndl or lederhosen to be seen. The lecture, on the Open Spanish, was fun and well received, but the simul proved to be very tough. This was hardly surprising given that I had not imposed any rating ceiling. Even the strong, competition-starved players in the state had jumped at the opportunity to participate. After five and a half gruelling hours, I conceded 5 draws and one defeat (to Australian under-16 champion, Patrick Gong) over 31 boards. It was a reasonable performance – especially considering I was still somewhat jet-lagged.

After a pleasant couple of days' rest, watching Sheffield Shield cricket at the historic WACA ground and enjoying a boozy river-boat cruise to and from the Sandalford vineyard, I flew to Melbourne and thence onwards, by road, to Ballarat – the scene of an 1854 rebellion against British colonial authority. The current club members proved less troublesome than their forbears: there were few signs of insurrection as I dispatched the lot of them in the pre-tournament simul.

A delightful 50th anniversary commemorative book of the Begonia Open, edited by local historian Patrick Cook, and with contributions by several Australian chess luminaries, marked the half-centenary in literary form. Nigh-on 150 competitors – a record number – showed their approbation for the occasion by entering. As top seed, my main opposition was expected to come from grandmasters Zong-Yuan Zhao and Max Illingworth, plus a smattering of young and talented IMs.

I was fortunate to survive the second round against ACF Vice President, Leonid Sandler, when my experimental Nimzowitsch Defence led to severe trouble. A strong Sunday showing, with a triplet of victories, however, kept me firmly in the race. The decisive encounter, against Kanan Izzat – a student of nanotechnology at Melbourne's La Trobe University – came on the final morning. The promising Azeri, who has already made a notable impression down under, was leading by half a point, so a win was necessary. My Barendregt Variation of the Caro-Kann, alas, went pear-shaped with remarkable rapidity. Noticing too late that my intended continuation lost the exchange, I proceeded anyway, as the alternatives were even less palatable. After considerable contemplation, Izzat grabbed the proffered material, but now the momentum had swung. Objectively, my compensation was inadequate, but my opponent, who was also running short of time, could not adjust to the new circumstances. My mounting initiative brought dividends when I first trapped his bishop on the side of the board and then smashed through on the kingside and in the centre. With this resounding victory I was adjudged, by Ian Rogers and Robert Jamieson, on a liberal interpretation of their remit, to be the winner of the brilliancy prize. A last-round draw with Illingworth allowed both Izzat and Bobby Cheng to catch me, but I had still attained my cherished objective of winning tournaments in six continents – possibly the only person to achieve this feat?

'But I had still attained my cherished objective of winning tournaments in six continents – possibly the only person to achieve this feat?'

After an excursion along the Great Ocean Road to the spectacular limestone stacks known as the 'Twelve Apostles' Kevin and I drove to the 150 year-old Melbourne Chess Club – the oldest in the southern hemisphere – for my next gig. The city boasts the M.V. Anderson Collection at the Victoria State Library – the third largest public collection of chess books in the world – and an active chess community, with several professional trainers, so it was a tad disappointing that my simul only filled up on the actual day. Nevertheless, both the talk and the display (+26, =3, –1) went reasonably well.

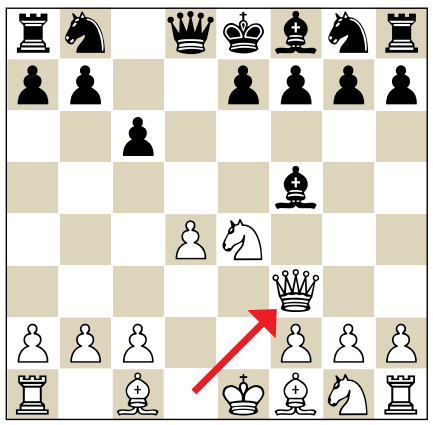
Adelaide was my next stop. As the last foreign visitor of note there was Boris Spassky, way back in 1989, understandably my visit generated some excitement. My host was the renowned neurologist and former Australian Junior Champion Rey Casse, who I had not seen since the Lloyds Bank Masters in 1978! It was also great to meet up again with my friend Anne Martin again after 30 years. Both of them emerged from chess retirement to play me. To begin, though, I had to endure the hardship of a wine-tasting tour of the Barossa Valley. Sometimes one has to suffer for one's art. Many of the best players in South Australia, including one IM, Trevor Tao, showed up to the simul at the prestigious Prince Alfred College. Given the strength of the opposition, I was more than satisfied with the score (+26, =3, –0). A lecture on the Evans Gambit, followed by a beer and wurst-munching trip to the old German settlement of Hahndorf with Will Wedding (one of the three escapees), concluded the visit.

Sydney – undoubtedly one of the most beautiful cities in the world – was the fitting final destination. Norths Chess Club (founded 1908) did a grand organisational job with a large audience showing up to see my talk on Ballarat. The simul (+27, =3, –0) finished late, but successfully. I was amazed to discover a recent state law prohibiting the serving of alcohol, even with a meal, after midnight. New South Wales is apparently becoming like Iran. This minor irritation notwithstanding, it was a brilliant trip and one which I intend to repeat and expand in the not too distant future. Queensland, which boasts a bustling chess culture, was my most obvious omission. Perhaps Tasmania could be tried too. The destination which intrigues me, though, is Darwin, the capital of Northern Territory. I even named my son Darwin. Unfortunately the latest tournament there had only four participants. Not much chance of that, then? ■

SECRETS OF OPENING SURPRISES

Tal's early queen move in the Caro-Kann

JEROEN BOSCH



5.♕f3!?

'Mikhail Tal once essayed 5.♕f3 in the 1971 Championship of the Soviet-Union (beating Yury Balashov), and that fact alone should set our mind at ease.'

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♕f3!?

Full points for surprise value! This queen move is hardly ever mentioned in the standard works on the Caro-Kann. While that may not speak entirely in its favour (is it simply too bad to consider?), this is a much more original way of harassing the bishop than the hackneyed 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.♘f3 and so on.

Mikhail Tal once essayed 5.♕f3 in the 1971 Championship of the Soviet-Union (beating Yury Balashov), and that fact alone should set our mind at ease. If a former World Champion was allowed to disregard the orthodox rule of 'do not develop the queen too early in the game' in the strongest national championship in the world, then certainly that provides us with some leeway.

Modern grandmasters who have adopted 5.♕f3 are, amongst others: Richard Rapport (who else!), Tigran Petrosian (not the World Champion) and Erwin l'Ami. While you may not be too surprised to learn that the original Hungarian grandmaster has tried his hand at 5.♕f3, you may wonder about his solid Dutch colleague. However, 5.♕f3 very often leads to a tiny edge for White, who then needs to grind out a win, and that may appeal to many a player! After all, unlike in the main lines of the 4...♗f5 Caro-Kann, there are no long theoretical lines to memorize here.

After the text the lines fork. Let's take a serious look at both **5...♗g6** and **5...e6**.

There are two minor lines to consider:

– 5...♕d5?! 6.♗d3 ♗xe4 – the point of Black's previous move: the queens will be traded (6...e6 7.♘e2 is a little awkward for Black): 7.♕xe4 ♘f6 8.♕xd5 cxd5 9.♘f3, and with two bishops White can always claim a little something. If you are in a frivolous mood and do not want to trade queens, you might consider the pawn sac 7.♗xe4 ♕xd4 8.♘e2, and now Black should play 8...♕d8 rather than 8...♕b6?! 9.♗e3! ♕xb2? 10.0-0.

– Of course Black can play in the style of the Fort Knox Variation in the French (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗d7 5.♘f3 ♗c6), but that's not the sort of thing you want to avoid. After 5...♗xe4 6.♕xe4 ♘f6 7.♕h4 e6 8.♘f3 ♗d6 9.♗d3 ♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♕h5 11.♕xh5 ♘xh5 the bishop pair again provides White with the better chances, Ginsburg-Thanisch, Hamburg 1995.

Variation I

5...♗g6

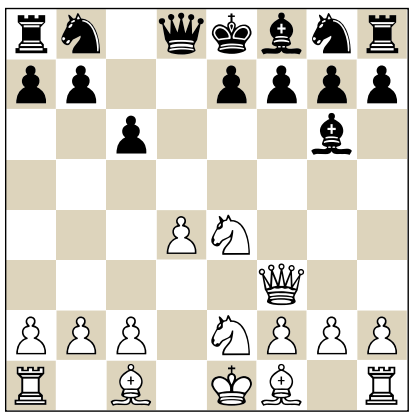
This was Harikrishna's choice in his game versus Rapport. It certainly feels more logical to play 5...e6 and only withdraw the bishop when you are forced to do so.

6.♘e2

Rapport's mundane choice. Attractive is 6.♗d3!? when 6...♘d7 7.♘e2 ♘gf6

8.♘2g3 e6 9.♗f4 ♗e7 10.0-0-0 ♘xe4 11.♘xe4 0-0 12.h4 ♕a5 13.♔b1 was Vorobiov-Kharitonov, St Petersburg 1999. White has a pleasant edge.

Critical, however, is accepting the (Greek?) gift with 6...♕xd4, when 7.♘e2 ♕d8 8.♘g5 ♘f6 (8...♘h6) 9.♗xg6 hxg6 10.♕b3 (note this switch to the queenside; we will meet it another few times in the course of this article!) 10...e6 11.♕xb7 is one possible continuation, but you can also go 8.0-0!?, playing for your lead in development.

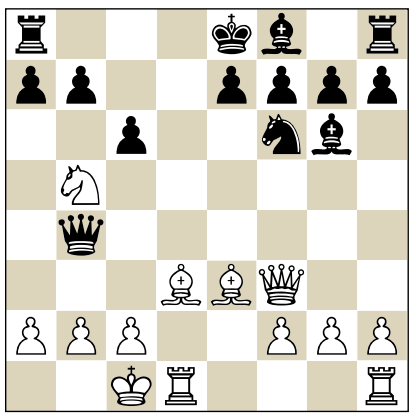


We will examine two main games from this position.

Kopylov-Akopov
Correspondence game USSR 1986

6...♕d5?! This is dangerous, for with an extra tempo, White can sac the pawn once more: **7.♘2c3! ♕xd4 8.♗d3 ♘d7 9.♗e3 ♕b4** The lesser evil was 9...♕e5, but White has a lot for a mere pawn.

10.0-0-0 ♘gf6 11.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 12.♘b5!

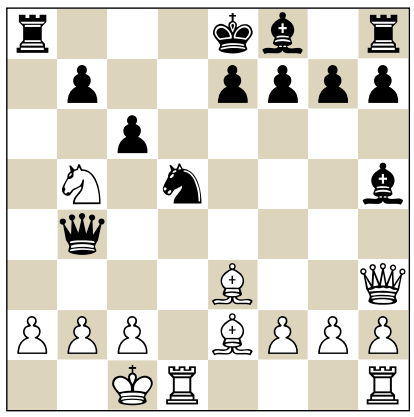


I will give the game in full, as the way in which White finishes off his opponent is very impressive:

12...♖c8 Not 12...cxb5?? 13.♕xb7 and wins. **13.♘xa7 ♗h5 14.♕h3 ♖a8** Instead 14...♗g4 15.♕h4 is an awkward pin. **15.♘b5!** And for the second time the knight hops to b5 with great effect!

15...♘d5 White wins after 15...cxb5 16.♕f5 e5 17.♕xe5+ ♗e7 18.♗xb5+ ♔f8 19.♖d4! ♕a5 20.♖a4 ♕d8 21.♗b6!.

16.♗e2!

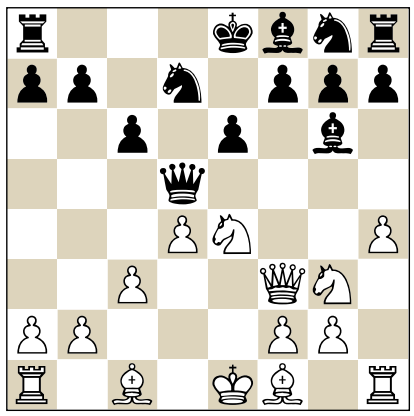


16...e6 16...♗xe2 17.♘c7+!. **17.♗xh5 g6 18.♖xd5! cxd5 19.♘c7+ ♔d7 20.♘xd5! ♕a5 21.♘b6+ ♔e8 22.♗e2 ♖d8 23.a4** 1-0.

Rapport-Harikrishna
Wijk aan Zee 2014

6...e6 7.c3 ♕d5 7...♘d7. **8.♘2g3 ♘d7** Here 9.♗d3 ♘gf6 10.0-0, Ibrahimova-Kharmunova, Moscow 2012, is normal and promises White a slight edge. Rapport instead went for the enterprising

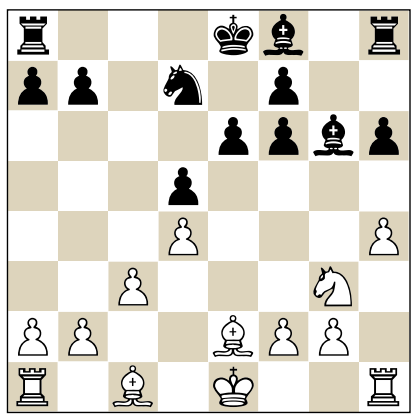
9.h4!?



9...h6 9...e5 is met solidly by 10.♘g5!, when Postny analysed 10...exd4 (10...h6 11.♕xd5 cxd5 12.h5 is a little better for White – Bosch) 11.h5 ♗c2 12.♕e2+ ♗e7 13.cxd4 (13.♕xc2?! ♗xg5) 13...0-0-0 14.♕xc2 ♗xg5 15.♗c4 ♕a5+ 16.♕c3 ♖e8+ 17.♔f1 ♕xc3 18.bxc3, and despite all the exchanges White is still better.

10.♗d3 ♘gf6 11.♘xf6+ gxf6 This looks slightly illogical. 11...♘xf6 was more circumspect. After 12.♗xg6 fxg6 13.♕d3 White is a tiny bit better.

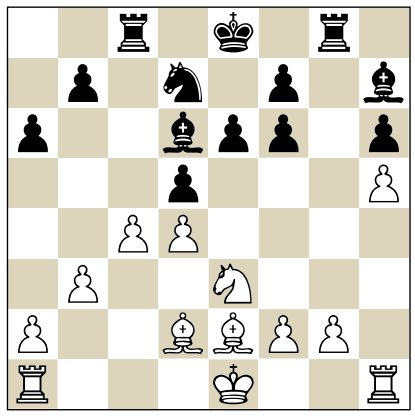
12.♕xd5 cxd5 13.♗e2



White has a slight advantage in this endgame due to his superior pawn structure, but it isn't all that much yet.

13...♗d6 14.h5 ♗c2 15.♘f1 a6 In case of 15...f5 White also plays 16.b3. **16.b3 ♖c8 17.♗d2 ♖g8?! 18.♘e3 ♗h7** 18...♗e4 could have been tried, when 19.c4 is a slight edge.

19.c4

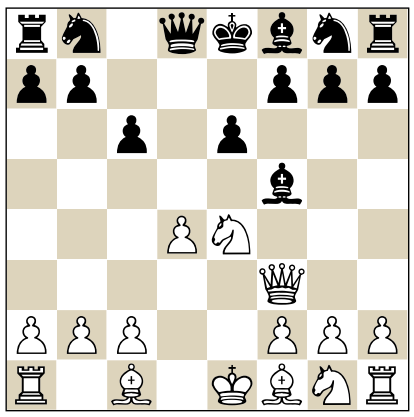


Now White's advantage is appreciable. After **19...dxc4 20.♘xc4 ♗f8 21.♖c1 ♖d8 22.♗f3** White is very active, while Black's pieces are hidden in a small rectangle.

22...♘b8 22...b5 23.♘a5. **23.♘a5 ♖xd4 24.♘xb7 ♗a3,** and now 25.♖c8+ ♔e7 26.♖xg8 ♗xg8 27.♗xh6 would have been the simplest way to achieve a winning position. Rapport instead played **25.♖c7** and won on move 68.

Variation II

5...e6 The normal reply. Black defends the bishop (which means that pawn d4 is hanging now), and prepares the development of his kingside.



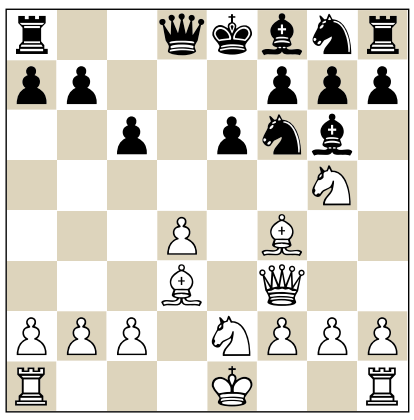
Naturally there is nothing wrong with 6.c3, but I won't investigate it further. We will first stop to consider 6.♗d3!? – as this is what Tal played in the game mentioned in the introduction – and then I would like to focus on 6.♘e2.

Variation II A

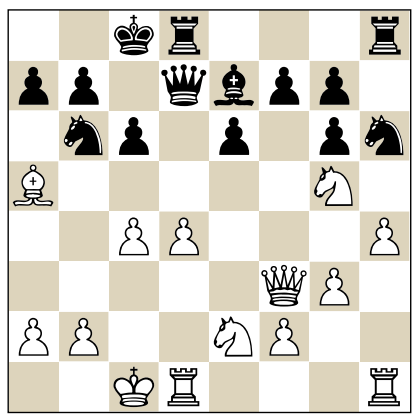
6.♗d3 Here, once again, 6...♗xe4 is not very impressive: 7.♕xe4 ♘f6 8.♕h4 is a little something for White. Please note that 6...♗g6 7.♘e2 ♘d7 8.♘2g3 ♘gf6 9.♗f4 transposes to Vorobiov-Kharitonov, which was mentioned in the notes to 5...♗g6. Finally 6...♘f6?! 7.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 8.♗xf5 ♕xf5 9.♕xf5 exf5 10.♗f4 is an obvious '±' position, T.L.Petrosian-Asrian, Stepanakert 2004.

Tal-Balashov
Leningrad 1971

6...♘d7 7.♘e2 ♗g6 8.♗f4 ♘df6!? 8...♘gf6 9.♘2g3 transposes once again to an above-mentioned position via 5...♗g6. **9.♘g5!?**

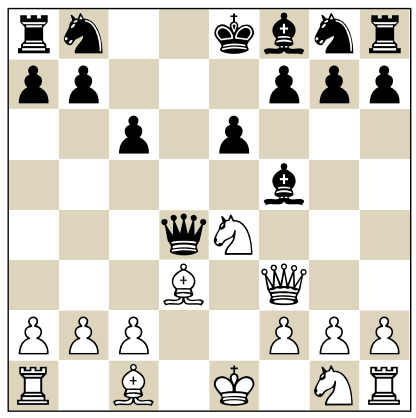


9...♘d5 Black in fact has two other good replies. I rather like 9...♗h5!, when Black is doing well. Furthermore, 9...♘e7 10.0-0-0 h6 11.♘e4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 ♗xe4 13.♕xe4 ♕d5 14.♘c3 ♕xe4 15.♘xe4 ♘g6 16.♗g3 was T.L.Petrosian-Bareev, Ohrid 2009, and now Black could have equalized with 16...f5 17.♘d6+ ♗xd6 18.♗xd6 0-0-0. **10.♗xg6 hxg6 11.♗d2 ♘h6 12.0-0-0 ♗b4!? 13.c3 ♗e7 14.h4 ♕d7?! 15.g3 0-0-0 16.c4 ♘b6** Better was 16...♘f6. **17.♗a5**

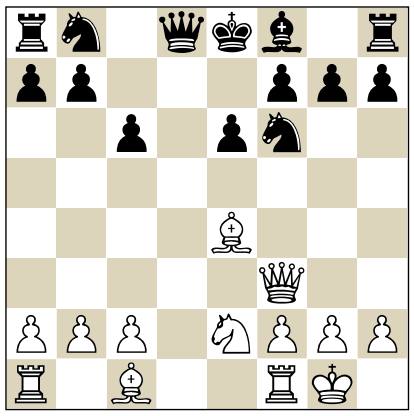


Black is under considerable pressure. Balashov now sacrificed an exchange with **17...♘xc4 18.♗xd8 ♖xd8** but Tal went on to win.

However, the proof of the pudding is always in the eating, and here (after Tal's 6.♗d3) I very much doubt whether White has enough after **6...♕xd4**



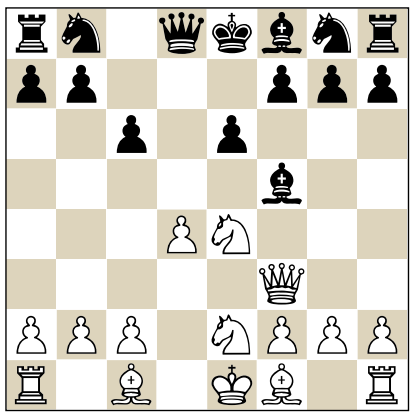
7.♘e2 ♗xe4 8.♗xe4 ♕d8 Also reasonable is 8...♕b6 9.♕g3 ♘f6 10.♗f3 ♘bd7 11.0-0 e5 (11...0-0-0 seems more than fine for Black too, Plenkovic-Hera, Split 2010) 12.♘c3 g6 13.a4 a5 14.♖e1 ♗d6, Bauer-Hauchard, Auxerre 1996, was perhaps not so clear at this stage. **9.0-0 ♘f6**



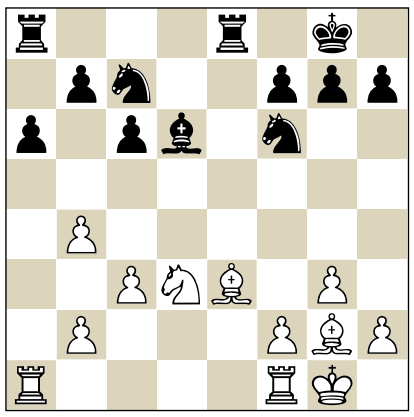
and I doubt that White has enough for the pawn here.
On the whole, I feel that I cannot recommend Tal's 6.♗d3.

Variation II B

6.♘e2



6...♘f6 Again Black may consider the 'Fort Knox' approach with 6...♗xe4 7.♕xe4 ♘f6 8.♕f3 and now after 8...♕d5 I like L'Ami's choice of 9.♕b3 ♕xb3 (9...c5) 10.axb3 ♘a6 11.c3 ♘c7 12.♘f4 ♗d6 13.♘d3 0-0 14.g3 ♖fe8 15.♗g2 e5 16.dxe5 ♗xe5 17.0-0 ♗d6 18.♗e3 a6 19.b4



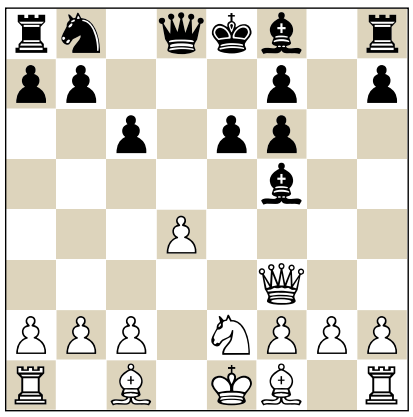
L'Ami-Kreisl, Legnica 2013. His bishop pair and Black's weakened queenside provide White with something to work with.

If 6...♗e7 7.c3 ♘d7 8.♘2g3 ♗g6 then White may launch his rook pawn with 9.h4! ♘gf6 10.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 11.h5 ♗c2 12.h6, and White retained the initiative in Mellado Trivino-Rausis, France 2002.

A normal continuation is 6...♘d7 7.♘2g3 ♗g6. White has a wide choice: 8.♗d3, 8.c3 and 8.h4 are all playable.

7.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 Natural, but White's next move demonstrates the downside of this capture.

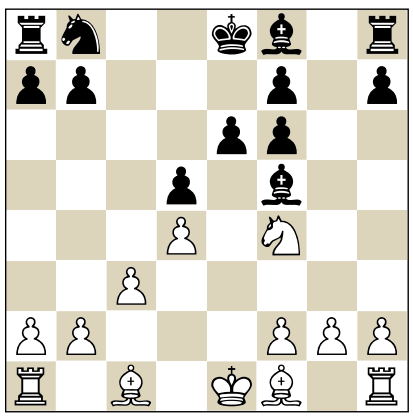
Therefore Black may consider 7...gxf6.



8.c3 (8.♕b3 can still be met by the standard 8...♕b6 9.c3 ♘d7 10.♘g3 ♗g6 11.♗e2 h5!, with equal chances). Now, after 8...♖g8?! 9.♘g3 ♗g4 (9...♗g6) 10.♕d3 Black was in real trouble in Ibrahimova-Umudova, Baku 2012.

If 8...♘d7 then I like 9.g4!? (9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.♘h5!?) 9...♗g6 10.♘g3, planning 11.h4.

Best is 8...♕d5 9.♕xd5 cxd5 10.♘f4 (also interesting is 10.h4!?, planning 10...h5?! 11.♘f4!)

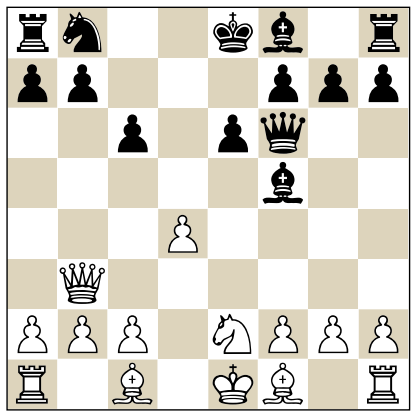


White twice managed to obtain a slight edge from the diagrammed position, although he didn't win in either game:

– 10...♘d7 11.♗e2 ♗d6 12.g4 ♗c2 13.♗e3 ♔e7 14.♔d2 ♗a4 15.h4 ♗c6 16.♘h5 b5 17.g5 f5 18.♗f4 ♗xf4+ 19.♘xf4, Plenkovic-D.Muse, Sibenik 2009.

– 10...♘c6 11.♗e2 (11.♘h5) 11...0-0-0 12.g4 ♗c2 13.♗e3 ♗d6 14.♘h5 ♗e7 15.♖c1 ♗e4 16.♖g1, Tazbir-Bartel, Germany Bundesliga 2013/14.

8.♕b3!



Switching over to the queenside to annoy Black there – a nice point of 5.♕f3 ! Now that Black no longer has ...♕b6, he is forced to make an awkward reply.

8...♕e7 This looks better than weakening the queenside by moving the b-pawn. However, Black hasn't finished moving his queen around if he wants to develop his kingside.

– 8...b6 9.♗f4! ♕d8 10.0-0-0 ♗d6, and now switching back to f3 gives White a great attacking position: 11.♕f3! 0-0 (11...♗xf4+ 12.♘xf4 ♘d7 13.h4!±) 12.g4 ♗g6 13.h4.

– 8...b5?! 9.a4! b4 10.♘g3 ♕xd4?! (10...♗g6) 11.♘xf5 exf5 12.♗e3 is much better for White.

9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.h4 h6

10...h5 leaves White a few options:

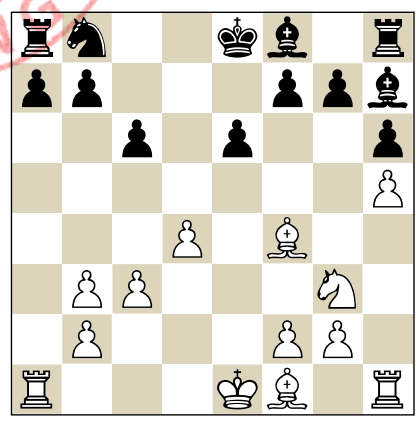
– 11.♗g5 ♕b4+ 12.c3 ♕xb3 13.axb3.

– 11.a3 ♕c7 12.♗d3.

– 11.c3 ♕c7 12.♗f4 ♕b6, with a slight edge in all cases.

11.h5 ♗h7 12.♗f4 ♕b4+ 13.c3 ♕xb3 14.axb3

This kind of endgame is always slightly better for White. It is very useful that the a-file has been opened. Putting the pawn on b4 puts pressure on Black's queenside. The light-squared bishop on h7 shoots into thin air and cannot assist on the queenside (pawn b7 is weak).



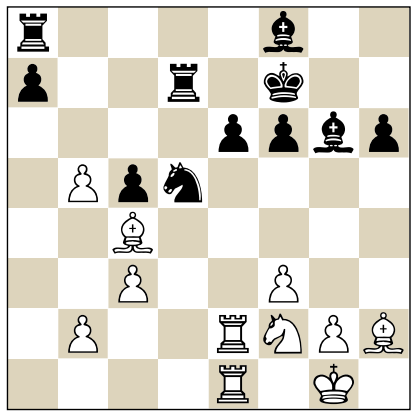
14...♘d7 15.b4 ♘f6 16.f3 ♗e7 17.♔f2 0-0 18.♗c4 ♖fd8 19.♗e5 ♘d5 20.♘e4 f6 21.♗h2

Now 22.♘c5 is an annoying threat, which is why Black now weakens his queenside with **21...b6 22.♖he1 ♔f7 23.♔g1 g5?!** Understandable, but probably making things worse by creating even more weaknesses.

24.hxg6++ ♗xg6 25.♖e2 25.♖a6 was also strong – 26.b5 is a strong threat.

25...♖d7 26.♖ae1 ♗f8 27.b5 Finally, White is making further headway.

27...c5 28.dxc5 bxc5 29.♘f2

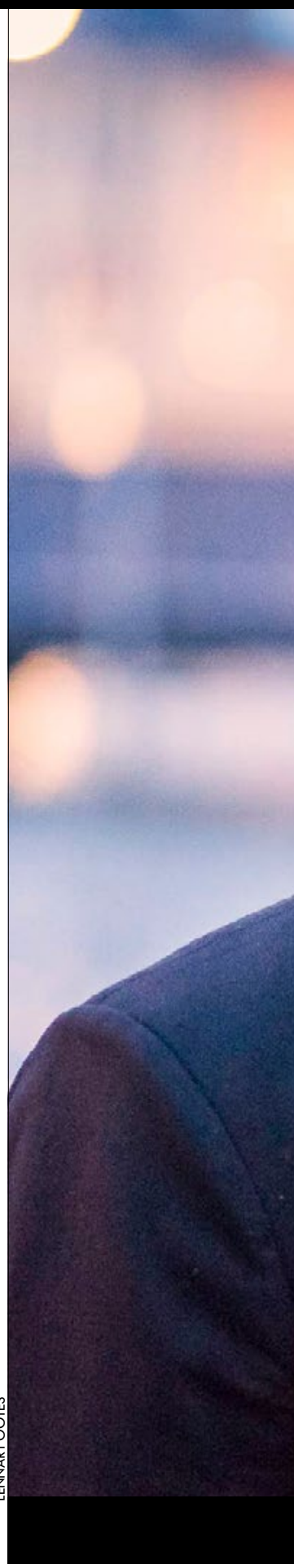


29...♔g7 Giving up the pawn in desperation. 29...♖e8 30.b6 axb6 31.♗b5 wins an exchange, but 30.♘h3, to increase the pressure with 31.♘f4, is technically perhaps even more precise.

We have been following Piorun-Mohammad, Doha 2015. White won on move 47.

In conclusion, Tal's queen move gives surprisingly good chances to obtain a small edge. White often obtains the pair of bishops and can then start to put in the hard yards. ■

Indian Summer in Reykjavik



LENNART OOTES

Only two Indians took part, but they left an indelible mark on the 2016 Reykjavik Open. Former Junior World Champion Abhijeet Gupta scored one of his finest wins to date, while Tania Sachdev made her second GM norm. Our reporter **SIMEN AGDESTEIN** arrived with a horde of ambitious students and extolls the virtues of Iceland as a chess nation.

Abhijeet Gupta and Tania Sachdev: regular visitors and Iceland fans forever after the 2016 Reykjavik Open.

Iceland has quite a chess history. The World Championship match in 1972 rocked the world, when Bobby Fischer made a spectacle that inspired people to play chess all over the globe. Iceland has been one of the great chess countries ever since.

However, the one who started it all was Fridrik Olafsson. Last year he celebrated his 80th birthday and on that occasion Fridrik was made Honorary Citizen of Reykjavik, only the sixth in history, for his outstanding achievements. In fact, Fridrik was Iceland's first world star in anything. Only many years later did Iceland become a force in handball and now their national football is very respectable, as they demonstrated by qualifying for the European Championship in France this summer.

Thanks to Fridrik a first world class chess event was staged in Reykjavik in 1964. In a 14-player round robin Mikhail Tal showed his brilliance. Gligoric came second, Fridrik third and actually a Norwegian finished fourth, Svein Johannessen.

From a Nordic perspective, Svein

Johannessen was a little behind Fridrik and Bent Larsen, the Great Dane. However, as I had the pleasure of experiencing many years later when I started to hang around the Oslo chess club and Svein was always there, this old pre-computer chess generation really had a feel for the game.

Many more tournaments were organized in Reykjavik, but it took a while before Iceland could come up with something similar to Fridrik's format. Only in the early 80s we saw the appearance of the quartet Johann Hjartarson, Helgi Olafsson, Jon Arnason and Margeir Petursson on the international chess scene.

I remember very well my duels with these guys. The first was the Nordic zonal tournament at Gausdal in 1985, where Margeir and I shared first ahead of the legendary Bent Larsen. Larsen said I had no positional understanding, but at least I came ahead of him and managed to beat Margeir in the play-off, which was held in Reykjavik some weeks later. I felt like Bobby Fischer, the way they treated me.

Some months later there was another Nordic playoff, this time with Johann, Helgi and me. We shared first in the Nordic Championship and we all became Grandmasters at that time. Again I came out on top. Somehow Iceland became my favourite chess country.

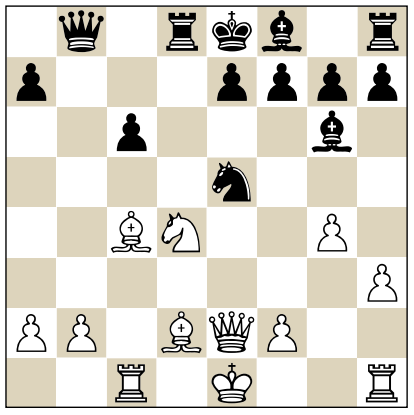
However, my good combatants from those days came much closer to the very top than I ever did. The peak was when Johann came second in the Interzonal in 1987 and actually beat the legendary Viktor Kortchnoi in the Candidates' matches the year after, before he was stopped by Anatoly Karpov. Johann was the hottest sponsor icon in Iceland then, I've heard.

The four of them together finished 5th at the 1986 Dubai Olympiad and 6th at the 1992 Manila Olympiad. Since then, there hasn't been that much grandiose about Icelandic chess. Still, Iceland, with its 13 GMs and 300,000 inhabitants, clearly is the number one country in the world when it comes to Grandmasters per capita.

Hannes Stefansson's five (!) victories in the Reykjavik tournaments are also a record worth mentioning. Hannes is now 44 and today one of four Icelandic Grandmasters who play chess fulltime, thereby getting the government's 'chess salary' of about 2500 euros per month. Hedinn Steingrimsson, Hjorvar Steinn Gretarsson and Henrik Danielsen are the three others, the last one originally from Denmark. The salary is not so bad, I would say, although it cannot be compared to an ordinary teacher's salary or something similar. Iceland has overcome the economic crisis that hit the country some years ago and is back to the good old 'high-expensive' standards. So 'only' being a Grandmaster won't get you that far. Actually, most of the Icelandic GMs have turned to civil careers. Being a chess grandmaster looks good on your CV and may function as a stepping stone, but not necessarily in a chess direction.

> 'Larsen said I had no positional understanding, but at least I came ahead of him and managed to beat Margeir in the play-off.'

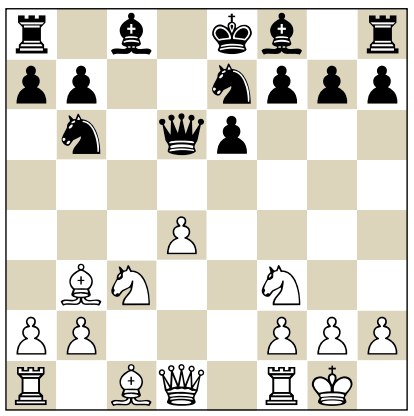
At this year's Reykjavik Open the Icelanders were far from the limelight on the top boards, but I happened to sit next to one two rounds in a row. Stefan Kristjansson, one of the Icelandic GMs that is not a professional, seemed to be an effective guy. It was murder in both games. The first day it was over in only 23 moves, unfortunately with Kristjansson on the wrong side.



Braun-Kristjansson
Reykjavik 2016 (1)
position after 17...♘e5

18.♘xc6! ♘xc6 19.♗b5 My God, I thought, is it possible to have such a wreck after so few moves? **19...♗e4** A last desperado. **20.♖xc6! ♖d7 21.♕c4 ♗xc6 22.♕xc6 ♕d8 23.0-0** 1-0.

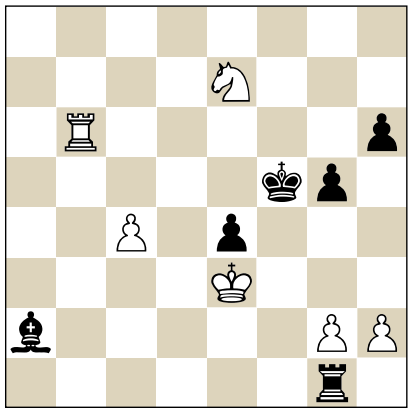
The next day, however, the roles were reversed. The Icelander was in the driving seat, and this one was even quicker.



Kristjansson-Karlsson
Reykjavik 2016 (2)
position after 11.0-0

11...g6? It's hard to find a worse move than this. **12.♘e4 ♕c7** Black could just as well have completed 'the work' with 12...♕d8. **13.♘f6+ ♔d8 14.♗g5** It's completely over, of course. **14...♘bd5 15.♖c1 ♕a5 16.♘e5 ♘xf6 17.♗xf6 ♖g8 18.d5 ♔e8 19.dxe6 fxe6 20.♖xc8+** 1-0.

Kristjansson wasn't the only GM with embarrassments. In the first round Sweden's up-and-coming Nils Grandelius walked straight into a sweet mating net.



Valdimarsson-Grandelius
Reykjavik 2016 (1)
position after 44.♘e7+

44...♔g4?? A last attempt to win, but it turns out to be suicide instead. **45.♔f2! ♖c1 46.h3+ ♔f4** 46...♔h4 47.♘f5+ and 46...♔h5 47.g4+ is also mate next move. **47.♘g6+** 1-0 47...♔f5 48.g4 mate.

Nils didn't seem too upset, though. He keeps smiling no matter what, it seems, and after a sweet streak of 7½ points in the next 8 rounds, he was only stopped by the tournament winner Abhijeet Gupta. You can find that game, with notes by the winner, at the end of this article.

This may have been the crucial game for the tournament victory, but Nils has no reason for complaining. Just after Reykjavik he won the qualification tournament for Norway Chess topping Jon Ludvig Hammer, Hou Yifan and Aryan Tari. At 16 Tari is Norway's youngest, but not the latest, GM. Next year Frode Urkedal (22) will also be a candidate, I presume. Norwegian chess is blossoming in the aftermath of Magnus Carlsen.

Normally speaking I would prefer a Norwegian to get the chance to play such a tournament on Norwegian soil. However, Nils is kind of one of us. He's played a lot in Norway and has been training with many of the good young Norwegians.

LENNART OOTES

Icelandic GM Stefan Kristjansson started with two brutal games. First a loss, then an even shorter win.

In Reykjavik the karma was with the Indians. After the recent Gibraltar tournament some thought that Vishy Anand's days were over. He even was close to being bypassed by Pentala Harikrishna in the world rankings, but as the Candidates' tournament clearly showed, Anand's days as India's flag ship are far from over.

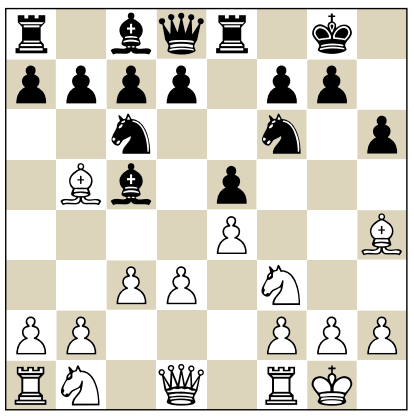
I remember I was in India on a football tour with my local club in 1993, which actually was sponsored by Tata Steel, and I played a chess simul against lots of youngsters in Calcutta. I was enormously impressed by the level. Sandipan Chanda, one of India's 41(!) Grandmasters, was 10 years old at the time and one of the kids playing me, he told me many years later.

India had only two players in Reykjavik this year. Abhijeet Gupta (26) is perhaps not the Indian we've heard most of, but he has already won many tournaments. He became a Grandmaster in 2006 at the age of 18 and the year after he became World Junior Champion. Anand was the first Indian to win that thing back in 1987 (which I remember well as Vishy beat me in that tournament) and later Harikrishna won in 2004.

Gupta seems to be a winner with nerves of steel. Against Alexander Shabalov, however, he only needed to execute a trap the American went straight into.

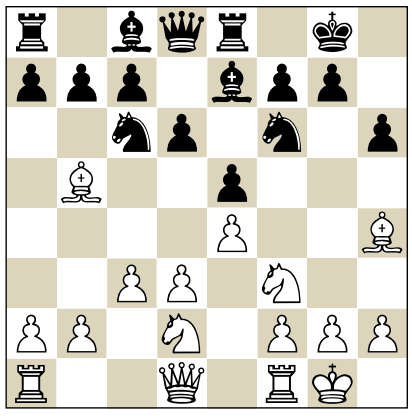
RL 7.1 – C65
Alexander Shabalov
Abhijeet Gupta
Reykjavik 2016 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 ♖e8 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4

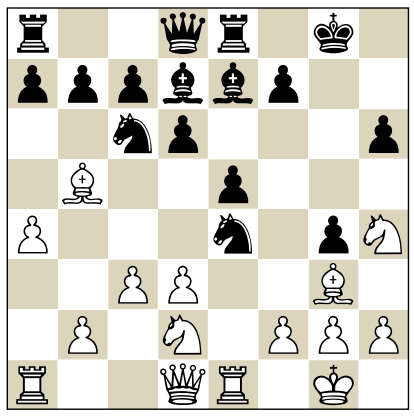


8...♗e7! This is the way to solve the pin problem. White's bishop isn't necessarily so well placed on the kingside.

9.♘bd2 d6

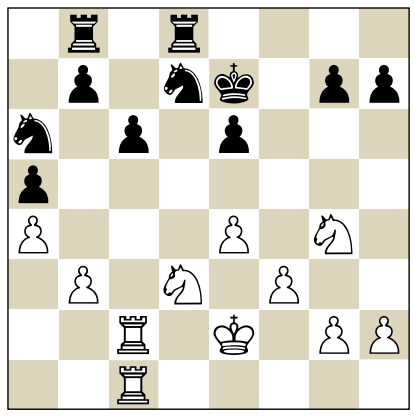


10.♖e1?! A natural move, perhaps, but the alarm bells should be ringing. Topalov showed more understanding against Hannes Stefansson in last year's Gibraltar tournament: 10.♗g3! ♗d7 11.a4 ♗f8 12.♖e1. Now, as the sting is taken out of the trick, White can develop naturally. After 12...a6 13.♗c4 g6 14.d4 ♗g7 15.♕b3 ♖e7 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♗d5 ♖b8 18.♘c4 ♘h5 19.♗h4 g5 20.♗g3 White had a very pleasant position. **10...♗d7** 10...g5 11.♗g3 g4 12.♘h4 ♘xe4 was already possible, but White then gets good compensation after 13.♘xe4 ♗xh4 and now either 14.d4 or 14.♗xh4 ♕xh4 15.d4. **11.a4?** Shabalov seems to be totally unaware of the trick in the position. **11...g5! 12.♗g3 g4 13.♘h4 ♘xe4!**



14.dxe4 True, a bit of calculation was called for. 14.♖xe4 ♗xh4 15.♖xg4+ ♗xg4 16.♕xg4+ ♕g5! 17.♕xh4 ♕xd2 18.f4 looks scary for Black, but after 18...♕xb2! 19.♖f1 ♕xc3! the queen miraculously returns home just in time. After **14...♗xh4 15.♗xh4 ♕xh4 16.a5 a6 17.♗c4 ♔g7** Black was just winning with a pawn up. 0-1 after 33 moves.

By winning again in the penultimate round against Sergei Movsesian, Gupta practically secured the 5000 euros first prize as he was now leading by one whole point. I know that concrete lines count for more than general considerations, but the following move by the Czech seemed a bit too anti-positional for my understanding.



Gupta-Movsesian
Reykjavik 2016 (8)
position after 35.♘g4

35...c5?! Earlier Black had voluntarily accepted an isolated pawn on e6. I thought that after Tigran Petrosian's famous win in the 5th game of the 1963 World Championship match against Mikhail Botvinnik, this structure was recognized as being no fun, but there must have been some concrete calculations that went wrong for Movsesian. 35...♘b4 36.♘xb4 axb4 is also better for White, but a least it isn't so ugly. **36.♘ge5 ♘xe5 37.♘xe5 ♖bc8 38.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 39.♔xd2 ♘b8**
39...♘b4 was a better try, with the option of jumping to d4 via c2 in some lines.
40.♔e3 b6 41.♖d1 ♖c7 42.♘c4 White has a dream position.

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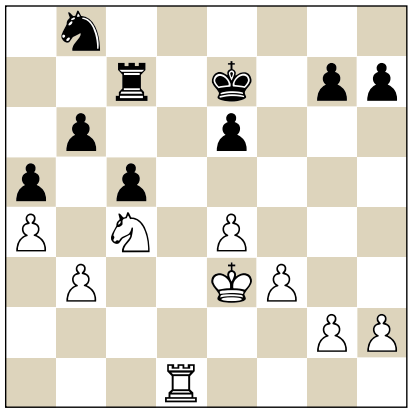
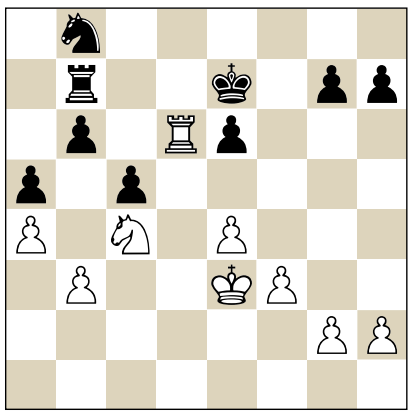
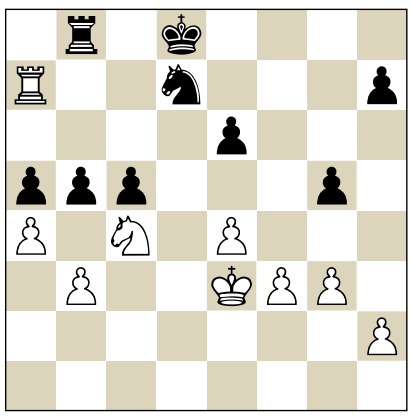


42...♖b7 43.♖d6 43.f4 followed by e4-e5 and only then enter with the rook, seemed clearer.



43...♘d7 After 43...b5 44.♘xa5 ♖a7 45.♘c6+ ♘xc6 46.♖xc6 bxa4 47.bxa4 ♖xa4 48.♖xc5 ♖a2 it may very well be a draw, but White can play 44.♖b6 ♖xb6 45.♘xb6, still with a clear advantage. **44.♖c6!** Now it looks like a positional crush à la Petrosian-Botvinnik. **44...g5** 44...b5 45.♘d6! didn't work. **45.g3 ♖b8 46.♖c7 ♔d8 47.♖a7 b5**



Black cannot just stay there, but with precise play Gupta brought home the bacon. **48.♘xa5 ♖b6 49.f4 gxf4+ 50.gxf4 ♔c8 51.e5 h5 52.♔d3 c4+ 53.bxc4 bxa4 54.♔d4 ♘b8 55.♔c5 ♖b2 56.♘c6 ♖xh2 57.♖a8 ♖b2 58.f5 exf5 59.e6 a3 60.♘xb8 ♔b7 61.♖xa3 ♔xb8 62.♖e3** 1-0.

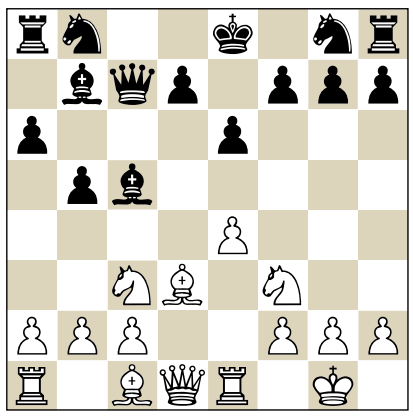
LENNART OOTES

Sergei Movsesian: brilliant attack.

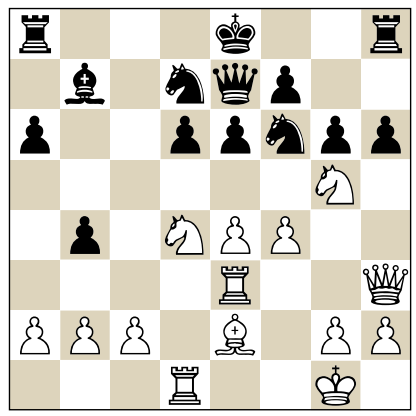
To do justice to Movsesian, his attack against Richard Rapport was brilliant.

SI 41.9 – B43
Sergei Movsesian
Richard Rapport
Reykjavik 2016 (6)

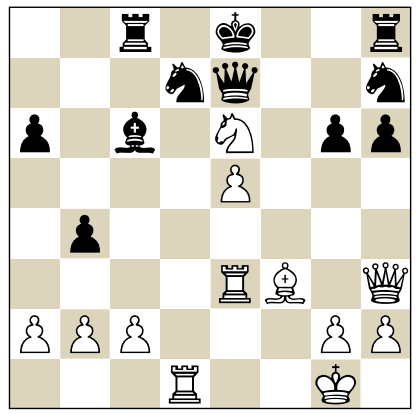
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 b5 6.♗d3 ♕b6 7.♘f3 ♕c7 8.0-0 ♗b7 9.♖e1 ♗c5



10.♘g5!? A novelty, it seems. Not that I have seen this position before, but 10.♕d2!? is my computer's choice, and actually it has been played a bit lately with good results. But the knight jump is interesting. It's surprisingly difficult to drive it away. **10...d6 11.♕h5 g6 12.♕h3 ♘d7 13.♗e3 ♘gf6 14.♖ad1 ♗xe3 15.♖xe3 b4 16.♘e2 ♘e5 17.♘d4 ♕e7** Sacking on e6 obviously is in the air. **18.♗e2 h6 19.f4 ♘ed7**



20.♘gxe6! Finally the knight moves, only to be replaced by an even worse menace coming from the other side. **20...fxe6 21.♘xe6 ♖c8 22.♗f3!** There simply is no defence to e4-e5. **22...♗c6 23.e5 dxe5 24.fxe5 ♘h7**



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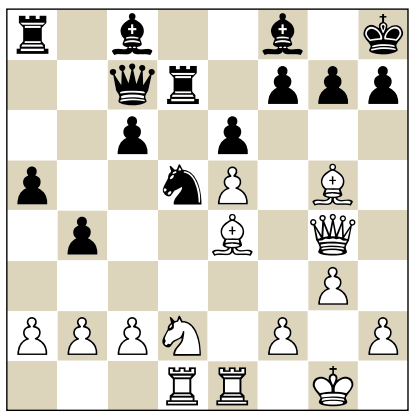
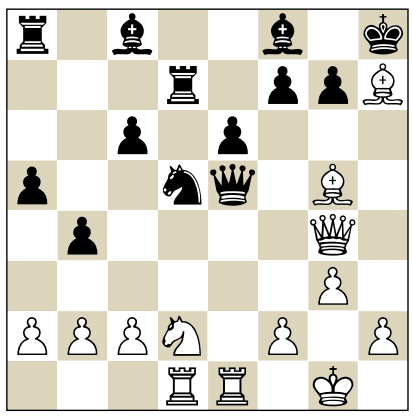
25.♘g7+! This is a high-class attack! **25...♕xg7 26.♕e6+ ♕e7 27.♕xg6+ ♔d8 28.♗xc6 ♘f8 29.♕e4 ♔c7 30.♗b7!** Movsesian is in his element here. Black is totally crushed. **30...♕c5 31.♗xc8** Simple chess. **31...♔xc8 32.♖d5 ♕c7 33.♕xb4** 1-0.

With a safe draw in the final round Gupta took clear first with 8½/10, half a point ahead of Dmitry Andreikin. I was impressed by the way Andreikin managed to create an unbalanced position against one of my students.

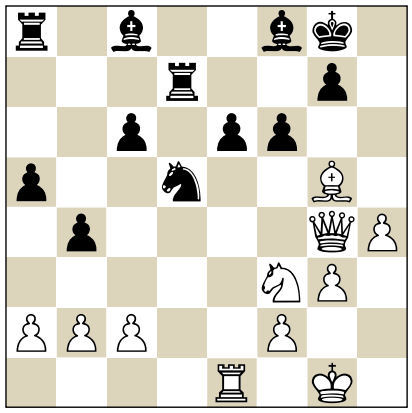


Hauge-Andreikin
Reykjavik 2016 (5)
position after 19.♗e4

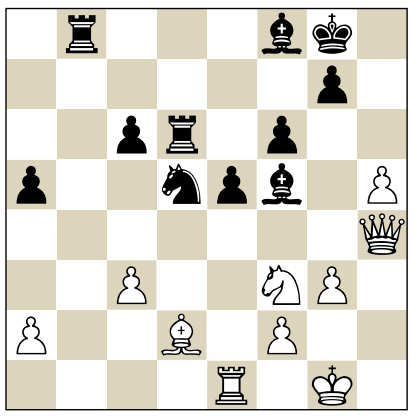
It seems like White has a nice position with prospects on the kingside, but the creative Russian changes the course of the game totally. **19...♕xe5!? 20.♗xh7**



20...♕xe1+! A dramatic decision. The computer condemns it, materialistic as it is, but White, my young student, suddenly faced some unexpected challenges.
21.♖xe1 ♔xh7 22.♘f3 ♔g8 23.h4 f6!?



24.♗d2 The computer says that it is clearly winning for White either way, but now Black kind of gets what he wants, a solid structure with unrealized prospects for the pieces. With 24.♕xe6+ ♖f7 25.♕xc6 ♗b7 26.♕b5 fxg5 and now for instance 27.♘e5 ♖e7 28.hxg5, it seems like White's queen combined with all the pawns should prevail.
24...e5 25.h5 ♖d6 26.♕h4 ♗f5 27.c4 bxc3 28.bxc3 ♖b8

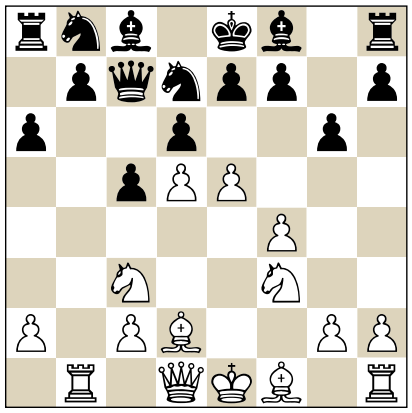


And still the computer claims a big White advantage, but the position is difficult and Black's pieces are active. White seemed to keep the advantage, but finally an inaccuracy came and Andreikin grabbed the chance instantly and won the game.
29.♕a4 ♘b6 30.♕xa5 ♗g4 31.♗e3 ♘c4 32.♕a7 ♖b5 33.♕a4 ♘xe3 34.♖xe3 ♗xh5 35.♕c2 ♗f7 36.♖e1 ♖d8 37.a4 ♖bd5 38.♖a1 ♗c5 39.♕e4?! ♖d3 40.c4? ♖c3 41.a5 ♗xc4 0-1.

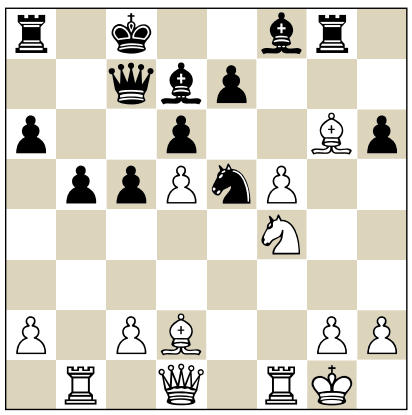
Also against Bragi Thorfinnsson, Andreikin showed his creative skills.

QP 7.14 – A45
Dmitry Andreikin
Bragi Thorfinnsson
Reykjavik 2016 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 Julian Hodgson was the big creator of fantastic ideas in this line, but after his retirement from active chess some 10 years ago, the opening went out of fashion. **2...c5 3.d5 ♕b6 4.♘c3!** In typical Hodgson-style. Activity was everything for him! **4...♕xb2 5.♗d2 ♕b6 6.e4 d6 7.f4 a6?!** It seems like Black doesn't have time for this. **8.e5 ♘fd7 9.♘f3 g6 10.♖b1 ♕c7**



11.♘g5! Very cool and extremely critical. **11...h6** Black's problem was that 11...dxe5 12.♗c4 followed by d5-d6 is absolutely horrible. The game continuation is not so clear actually. **12.♘xf7 ♔xf7 13.e6+ ♔e8 14.exd7+ ♘xd7 15.♗d3 ♖g8 16.♗xg6+** It seems like the game is over as 16...♖xg6 17.♕h5 loses the rook. But material is equal, and only after some more very strong moves by Andreikin, it became clear that White had the upper hand. **16...♔d8 17.f5 ♘e5 18.0-0 b5 19.♘e2 ♗d7 20.♘f4 ♔c8**



LENNART OOTES

Former Russian champion Dmitry Andreikin was in a creative mood.

21.♗h7! Here we go again! **21...♖h8 22.♘g6! ♖xh7 23.♘xf8 ♖f7 24.♘e6 ♗xe6 25.dxe6 ♖f8 26.♗xh6** and White kept his extra pawn and manoeuvered the game to a win through some further straits.

■ ■ ■

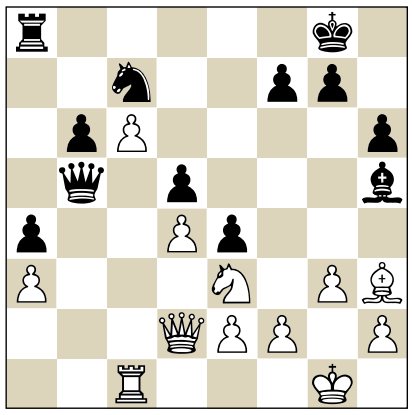
Tania Sachdev, the other Indian in the tournament, completed the Indian's success by scoring her second GM-norm. Of India's 41 GMs, only two are female. Now Tania, a Red Bull athlete, is close to joining ranks with Humpy Koneru and Harika Dronavalli. This is what she told us when we asked her to look back on this special result:

I have always enjoyed playing in the Reykjavik Open. It's a strong tournament, the place is mind-blowing, the people are warm, I remember my first year was 2008. I got to meet Spassky and behaved like a certified groupie! I have been back four times since and each one has been memorable.

This year was extra special. Starting with Aryan Tari in Round 4 every day I was paired against a strong grandmaster. No one would let me off easy and often my board would be the last to finish. It was really exhausting but I loved every minute of it!

In my game against Tari, I found a nice idea in the rook + pawn endgame. Then I beat Hannes Stefansson in a far from perfect but very interesting game. I beat Alejandro Ramirez in Round 6. He played terribly that day and I have to give him more credit for this game than myself. Then I drew with Dmitry Andreikin, my first 2700+ opponent! I always had a comfortable position but had to make 20 moves in about 3 minutes. I thought my brain would explode out of happiness at not blundering away in that one. Then against Gawain Jones I found a sweet trick that saved the day. I drew a winning ending with Movsesian in Round 9 and made my GM norm ☺. The last game against Beliavsky I managed to hold after a long fight and a bit of luck. Finally finishing on a very happy 7/10.

Here are some crucial moments that shaped my tournament.

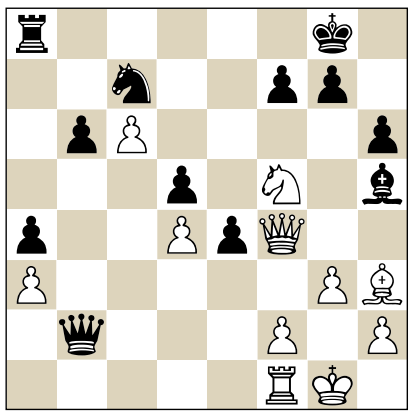


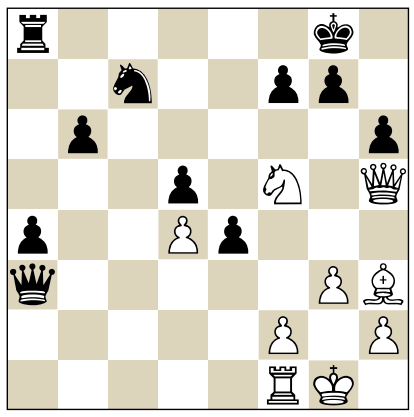
Sachdev-Stefansson
Reykjavik 2016 (5)
position after 29...♘c7

Hannes got a great position out of the opening, but misplayed it and I ended up with a very strong c6-pawn. I was very happy with my position but was short on time and still ten moves to make!

30.♘f5! Bringing all my pieces to the offensive.

30...♕xe2 31.♕f4 ♕b2 32.♖f1





‘I remember my first year was 2008. I got to meet Spassky and behaved like a certified groupie!’

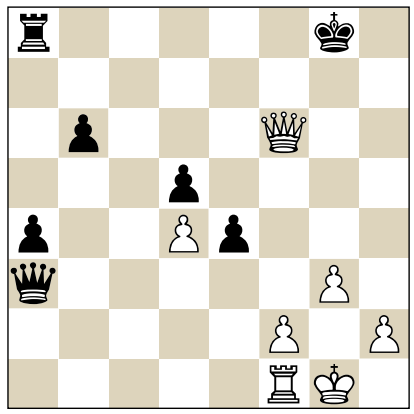
When low on time, it is always a good idea to place one’s pieces where they are protected, this avoids many heart breaks. Now Black is in a lot of trouble. All of White’s pieces are well placed, the pawn on c6 is gold and Black, though a pawn up, has zero coordination.

32...♘e8 33.c7 ♕xa3 34.♕h4?! Missing the strong 34.♕e5 – White is simply threatening to move the knight and win big material.

34...♘xc7 35.♕xh5

35...♘e6?? After 35...♕f8! the position is very dangerous for White. No attack and though a piece up the queenside passers give Black more than enough compensation.

36.♘xh6+ gxh6 37.♗xe6 fxe6 38.♕g6+ And everything falls with checks. **38...♔h8 39.♕xh6+ ♔g8 40.♕g6+ ♔h8 41.♕h6+ ♔g8 42.♕xe6+ ♔f8 43.♕f6+ ♔g8**



44.♕xb6?! 44.♕g6+ was immediately winning: 44...♔h8 45.♕h6+ ♔g8 46.♖c1 e3 47.♕e6+ ♔h8 48.♕e5+ ♔g8 (48...♔h7 49.♖c7+ and mate soon) 49.♕xd5+.

44...♕b3? 44...♕f3 would have made my life difficult as Black just wants to play ...♖f8, attacking f2, tying down my rook.

45.♕g6+ ♔h8 46.♖c1 ♖f8 47.♕h5+ Protecting the d1-square.

47...♔g8 48.♖c7 1-0.

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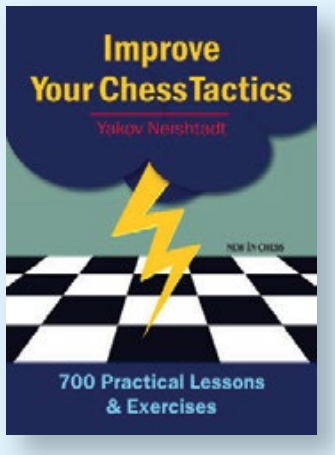

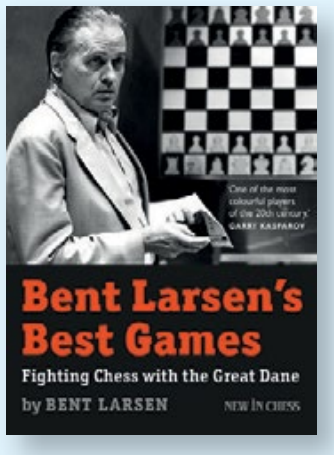

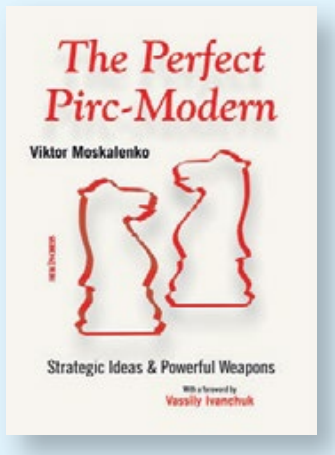

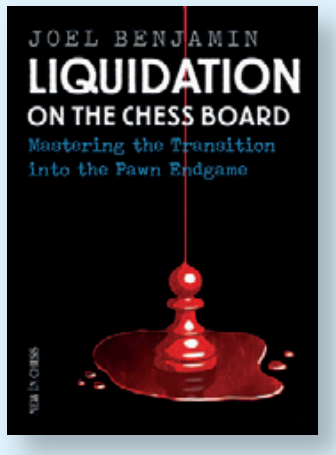

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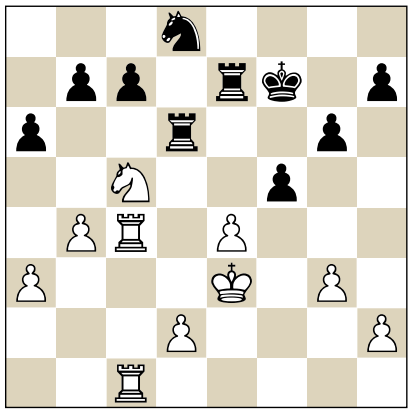
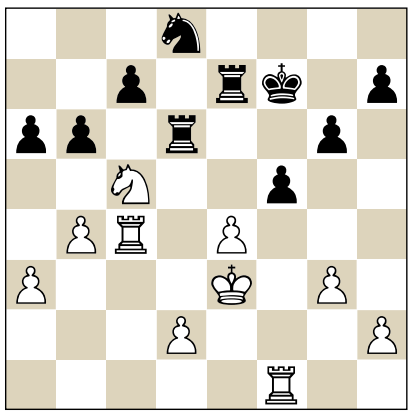
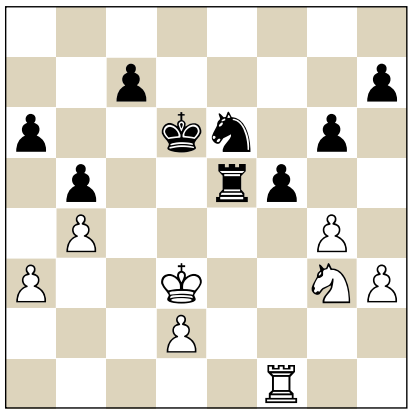


Movsesian-Sachdev
Reykjavik 2016 (9)
position after 32...♖d6

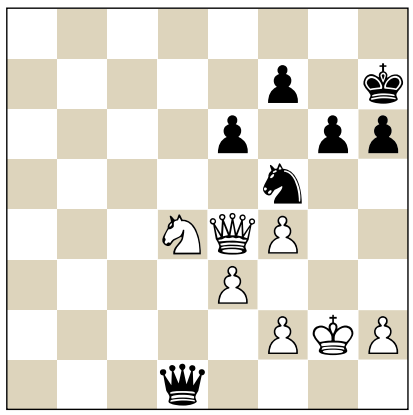
I needed a draw for my Grandmaster norm and though I ended up in a slightly passive endgame out of the opening, I wasn't too worried. Then here, Sergey went very wrong.
33.♖f1? b6 A nice little trick!



34.♘b3 34.♘xa6 runs into 34...b5.
34...b5 35.♖d4 ♖xd4 36.♘xd4 ♖xe4+ 37.♔d3 ♔e7 38.h3 ♔d6 39.g4 ♘e6 40.♘e2 ♖e5 41.♘g3



41...fxg4?! After the game Sergey told me his big hope after losing the pawn was that he knew I needed a draw for my norm, and so might end up playing a little too safe. That pretty much sums up the rest of the game. My advantage fizzled out soon enough, and the game ended in a draw.
41...♖d5+ was much stronger: 42.♔c3 (42.♔e2 ♘d4+ 43.♔f2 c5 winning) 42...fxg4 43.hxg4 (or 43.♘e4+ ♔e5 44.♘f6 gxh3 45.♘xd5 ♔xd5 winning) 43...♖d4 and Black is winning.

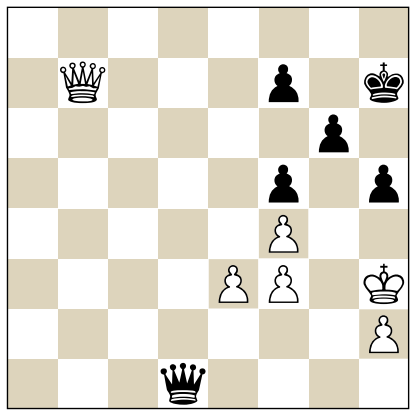


Sachdev-Beliavsky
Reykjavik 2016 (10)
position after 50.♔g2

LENNART OOTES

Tania Sachdev made her second GM norm and finished on a 'very happy 7/10'.

I had made my Grandmaster norm and inexplicably we often mess up the game right after making a norm. This tournament, I had played so many strong grandmasters and the games were going so well. The last game I was playing Beliavsky, an opportunity to play a legend! With the norm behind me I just wanted to finish well. Last rounds go a long way in determining one's feeling at the end of the tournament and I just wanted to be in the best possible mood to go celebrate later! We reached this position after I messed up a slightly better middlegame. Then from an equal position Beliavsky created this. Amazingly this position is lost for me. We found a really instructive idea in the post mortem.
50...♕g4+
Here the winning idea is 50...♘h4+! 51.♔h3 (51.♔g3?? ♕g1+ 52.♔h3 (52.♔xh4 ♕xh2+ 53.♔g4 f5+, winning) 52...♕xf2, winning) 51...h5 52.f3 ♘f5 53.♘xf5 exf5 54.♕b7.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Both of us had calculated till here and assumed that after 54...♔g7 55.♕b2+ ♔g8 56.♕f2 White is fine. We both missed the winning 54...♔h6!. White has no good squares left! 55.♕a8 ♔g7 and Black wins the e3-pawn next.
51.♔f1 ♘h4 52.♔e1 ♕g1+ 53.♔e2 ♘f5 54.♘xf5 gxf5 55.♕b7 ♔g6 56.h3 ♕c1 57.♕g2+ ♔f6 58.♕g8 ♕c4+ ½-½.

■ ■ ■

Somehow Iceland has become a tremendous tourist destination for chess players. Many come back year after year. 'I just love it!', I heard a German say. Germans were the biggest foreign group in the tournament, with 31 players, but Norway was also well represented with 19. Seven of those were my students, and a few more were previous students and some hopefully future students.

My best bet these days is Aryan Tari, who's already become a GM at the age of 16. He took his first GM-norm three years ago, actually, but taking the title at 16 isn't bad either. Both he and many of the others have got good help from Evgeny Romanov. The Russian GM spent a year in Norway and tried to settle there, which would have been great. Good players, especially those that give as much as Evgeny does, are certainly welcome.

However, the market for coaching isn't as big as one might think. Chess gets enormous publicity in Norway with the big TV-channels competing for showing Magnus Carlsen's games. Still, the big boom that came after Bobby Fischer in 1972 hasn't quite come to Norway yet. We're still a small group of chess players. I still struggle every year to fill my quota of about four players yearly to my chess department at the Norwegian College of Elite Sports (Norges Toppidrettsgymnas).

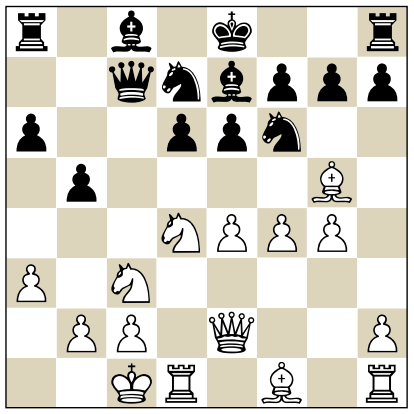
At the time it's prospering with 11 students, of which Aryan is a GM and four more already are IMs. Two and a half hours of chess training four days a week is integrated in the school timetable. The students come from all over Norway. Most have to move to attend the school, which gives a great social environment. Half the job is already done by just collecting the best players like this. Aryan plays in five different national leagues and they play tournaments everywhere all the time, but sometimes we manage to go together, which is perhaps the most profitable thing we do. The cheaper, the better, is often the case. In London one and a half years ago all 14 stayed in the same very tiny room. Welcome to NTG, I say to newcomers seeing this. The World Champion has come out of this. Sometimes you can do quite a lot with very little money. Dedication counts for more.

> 'Magnus read all the time, and he still does, I believe, but the younger generation tends to depend more on the computer.'

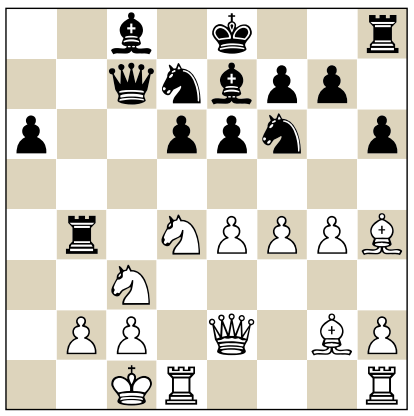
For me personally, after 18 years as a fulltime chess coach, the main inspiration is the social aspect. I can get horribly tired of chess sometimes, but I never get tired of being with the youngsters. They're very serious (sometimes) and prepare properly before the games, but not many read chess books. Magnus read all the time, and he still does, I believe, but the younger generation tends to depend more on the computer. At the level they are now, why not add another dimension by reading more, I try to say, at least when you have great authors like Parimarjan Negi. His books on the Sicilian are absolutely fantastic. Aryan Tari got a sweet win in the last round thanks to one of these books.

Sl 4.1 – B96
Aryan Tari
Justin Sarkar
Reykjavik (10)

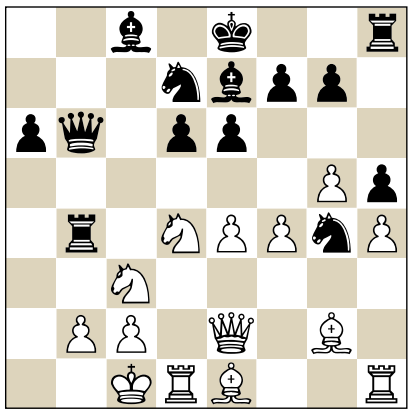
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 ♘bd7 If it's this move or White's next that defines this as 'latest fashion', I'm not sure. **7.♕e2!?** I remember in my younger days studying some very long lines with knight sacrifices on e6, but all this used to start with pawn to f4 and queen to f3. **7...e6 8.f4 ♕c7 9.0-0-0 b5 10.a3!** With this setup it makes very much sense to have the queen on e2 and rather let a bishop fight on the long diagonal. **10...♗e7 11.g4** White simply wants to roll with the pawns on the kingside.



11...h6 According to Aryan 11...♗b7 is the other main line. The point of interposing this little move comes in the surprising variation 11...♖b8 12.♗g2 b4 13.axb4 ♖xb4 14.e5 dxe5 15.♘c6! and f4 is protected. However, White now gets another nice option with the dark-squared bishop. **12.♗h4 ♖b8** Still, 12...♗b7 is an alternative. **13.♗g2 b4 14.axb4 ♖xb4**



15.♗e1! Aryan simply follows Negi's analysis and actually a few games with slightly weaker players. **15...♕b6 16.♗f2!** I must admit I don't have Negi's book available at the moment, it's probably well hidden under lots of clothes or something in one of the students' apartments, so I base my comments on what Aryan told me. 'It was just about remembering what was in the book', he said. **16...♕c7 17.h4 h5 18.g5 ♘g4 19.♗e1** 19.g6 0-0! 20.gxf7+ ♖xf7 21.♘xe6 ♕a5 22.♘d5? ♖a4! isn't what White wants. **19...♕b6**



19...♖b8 was necessary, according to Aryan. Now comes a very powerful blow. **20.♘d5!** This would not have been possible some moves ago, with the black knight on f6, as Black then could have taken on d5 with the knight and next on d4 with the rook if taking back. **20...exd5 21.♗xb4 ♕xb4 22.exd5 ♘b8** Black is doing his best to prevent the knight invasion on c6, but in vain. **23.♖h3!** There are a few nice manoeuvres in this game, but credit should be given to Negi. Still, I'm happy when my students are up-to-date. You don't need to invent the wheel in *every* game. **23...♕a5 24.♖b3 ♕a1+ 25.♔d2 ♕a5+ 26.c3 ♕c7 27.♖e1** 1-0.

It's perhaps unfair to be compared with a millennium talent like Magnus Carlsen, but Aryan's love and dedication to the game is of a similar standard. And that's perhaps the most important prerequisite for becoming really good. Aryan surely has the potential.

In Helgi Olafsson's two volumes on all the Reykjavik tournaments (*Reykjavikurskakmot i 50 Ar* – yes, it's in Icelandic – the second volume appeared this year), that came out in connection with the 50-year anniversary in 2014, we find a complete list of all the tournament results, which makes quite interesting reading. The number of participants made a huge jump some years ago. Last year it reached a peak with 255 participants. This time there were 235. Abhijeet Gupta has now joined ranks with Mikhail Tal, Fridrik Olafsson, Jan Timman, Fabiano Caruana and many others on the winners' list. Actually I find myself on it too. Iceland was really my favourite chess country. Now I will be very happy to see the same happen to my students.

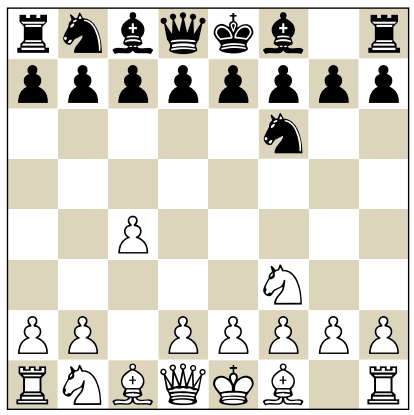
Aryan Tari, at sixteen Norways youngest GM, literally took a leaf out of Parimarjan Negi's book.

LENNART OOTES

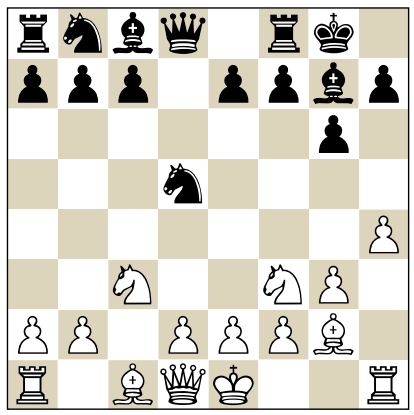
NOTES BY
Abhijeet Gupta

EO 51.5 – A16
Nils Grandelius
Abhijeet Gupta
Reykjavik 2016 (9)

Before this game I enjoyed a half-point lead and Nils was the only player on second spot. Nils is generally a fighting player who goes for sharp lines, which suited me just fine.
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4



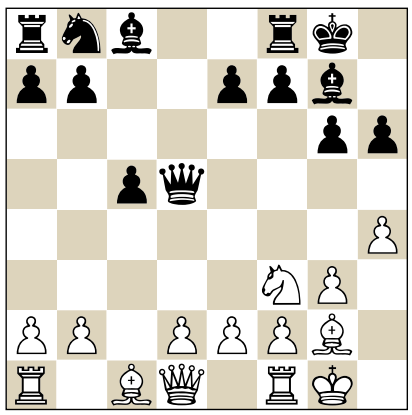
While preparing for this game, I found that my opponent had played at least five different moves on the first turn. I wasn't quite spoilt for choice here – go through my entire repertoire or just take a nap before the game? Of course, I chose the latter.
2...g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.h4
An interesting concept that I have played myself as White.



7...h6
In my opinion, the most solid reply. 7...e5 is met solidly by the simple 8.♘xd5! (after 8.h5 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 e4 is

Black's idea) 8...♕xd5 9.d3 ♘c6 (9...h6 gives White attacking chances after 10.♗e3 ♕a5+ 11.♔f1 ♘c6 12.♕c1) 10.h5 ♗g4 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♖h4, and White has a typical attack.

8.0-0 c5 9.♘xd5 ♕xd5

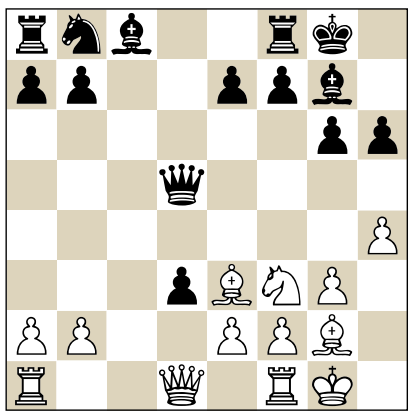


10.d4

Technically a novelty, but it is impossible to miss it, as this is the first line that engines suggest. The other main line here is 10.d3 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♕h5!. I am sure this move has been analysed by many Grünfeld players, but of course it was first played by 'The Guru', Peter Svidler himself ☺.

10...cxd4 11.♗e3 d3!

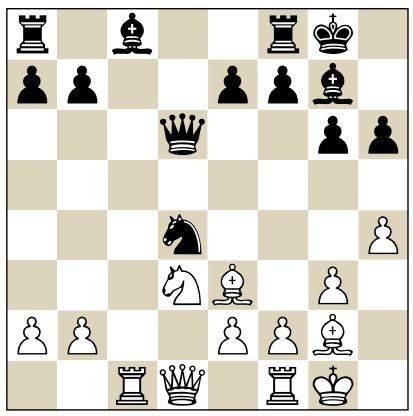
A nice move to make, especially when you remember that it also has an exclamation mark in your notes.



12.♘e1

The most testing continuation is 12.♘d4, and probably on a better day Nils would have gone for it instantly. Now play can continue 12...♕d8 (the alternative is obviously 12...dxe2 13.♕xe2 ♕a5 14.♖ac1 ♘c6! 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♗xc6 ♖b8 17.b4 ♖xb4 18.♗c5 ♖b2 19.♕xe7 ♗e6 20.a4 ♖c8 21.♕xa7 ♕xa7 22.♗xa7 ♖a2 23.♗b5 ♖xc1 24.♖xc1 ♗b3! and finally Black is able to equalize) 13.♕xd3 e5 14.♘b5 ♕xd3 15.exd3 ♘c6 16.♖fc1 ♖d8 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.♘xa7 ♗e6 19.♘xc6 ♖xd3, and the bishop pair gives Black ample compensation for the pawn.

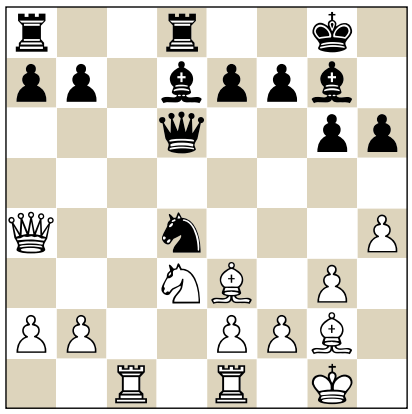
12...♕d6 13.♘xd3 ♘c6 14.♖c1 ♘d4



15.♖e1

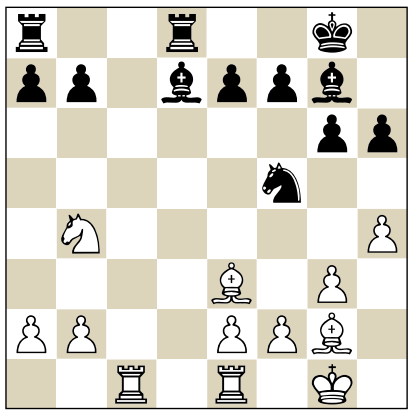
15.♘c5 is what I had in my file, but it doesn't give anything for White either: 15...♖d8 16.♗xb7 ♖b8 17.♗xc8 ♖bxc8, and the position is equal.

15...♖d8 16.♕a4 ♗d7



17.♕b4 Probably a better way to equalize is 17.♕a3 ♕xa3 18.bxa3 ♗g4 19.♗xd4 ♖xd4 20.♖c7 ♖ad8 21.♖xe7 ♖4d7 22.♖xd7 ♖xd7, with a drawish position.

17...♕xb4 18.♘xb4 ♘f5!



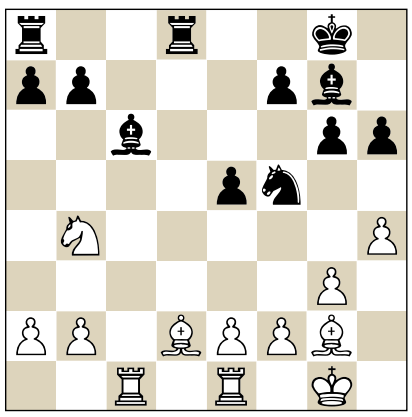
19.♗f4?! From here on in, White starts to drift. After 19.♗c5 b6 prac-

In the penultimate round Abhijeet Gupta scored a key victory against his closest rival Nils Grandelius.

LENNART OOTES

tically forces a draw: 20.♗xe7 ♘xe7 21.♗xa8 ♖xa8 22.♖c7 ♗e6 23.♖xe7 ♗f8 24.♘c6 ♗xe7 25.♘xe7+ ♔f8 26.♘c6 ♗xa2 27.♖a1 ♗c4 28.♖xa7 ♖xa7 29.♘xa7 ♗xe2 30.♘c8!.

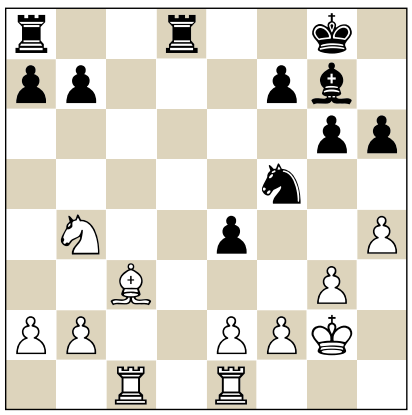
19...e5 20.♗d2 ♗c6



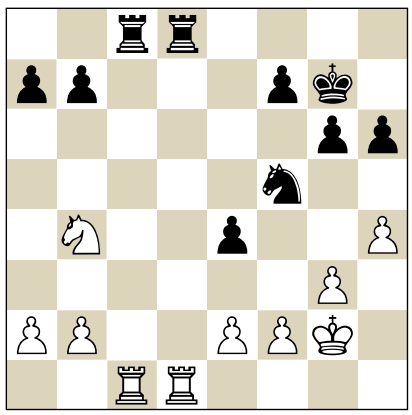
21.♗c3?! This is just being lazy now. After 21.♘xc6 ♖xd2 22.♘a5 ♖xb2 23.♘xb7 ♘d4 24.♔f1 ♖b8 25.♘d6 I don't see how Black can pose problems for White.

21...♗xg2 22.♔xg2 e4

Now I can play for 'two results' with an added bonus – almost 40 minutes extra on the clock ☺.

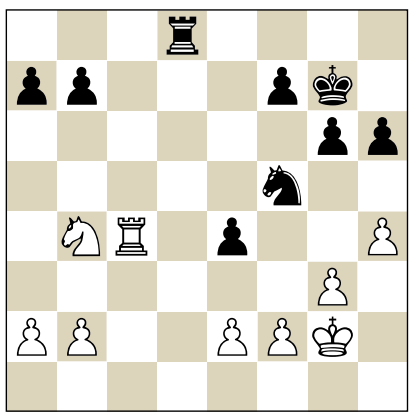


23.♗xg7 ♔xg7 24.♖ed1 ♖ac8!



Although it is an easy move to make, it is still rather pleasing to the eye.

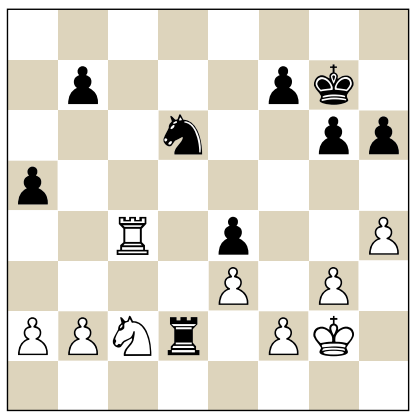
25.♖xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖c4



26...a5?!

Better was 26...♖d2 27.♖xe4 ♘d6!. Of course, I hadn't seen this move and, surprisingly after this, it is not at all easy for White to hold on: 28.♖e3 ♖xb2 29.a3 a5 30.♘d5 a4, with a clear advantage for Black.

27.♘c2 ♖d2 28.e3 ♘d6

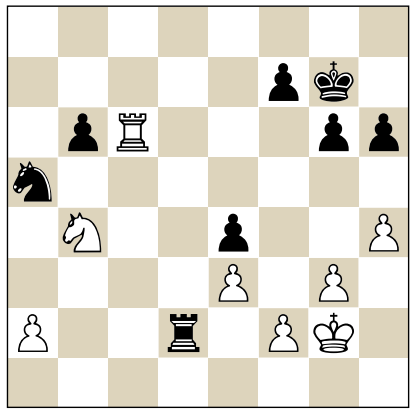


29.♖c5 29.♖c7? runs into the beautiful 29...♘e8! with the idea ...♘f6-g4.

29...b6 30.♖c6 ♘b7 31.b4

After 31.♖xb6 ♘c5 32.♘e1 ♘a4 33.♖c6 ♘xb2 34.♖c2 ♖xc2 35.♘xc2 ♔f6 we probably have a slightly better version of what I had in the game.

31...axb4 32.♘xb4 ♘a5

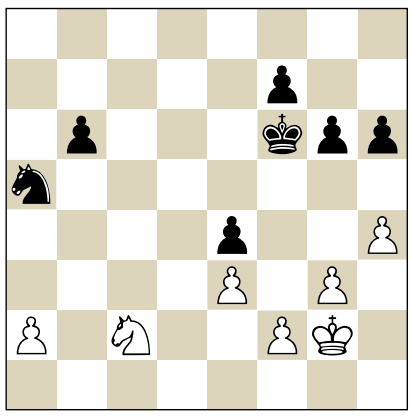


33.♖c2?!

With precise play White can probably still hold on after this, but this is already skating on very thin ice. White had at least a couple of ways to hold this position without this move, e.g. 33.♖c7 b5 34.♖c2! ♖xc2 35.♘xc2

♘c6 36.f3 f5 37.fxe4 fxe4 38.♘d4. Or simplest of all: 33.♖c3 b5 34.g4 ♘c4 35.♔g3 ♖b2 36.♖b3.

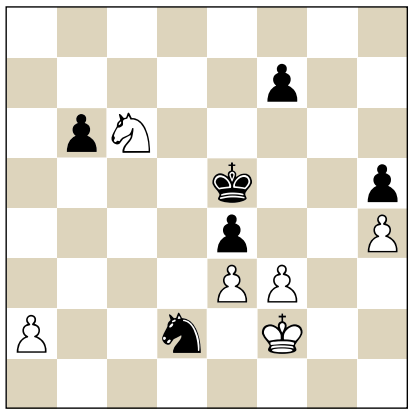
33...♖xc2 34.♘xc2 ♔f6



35.f3?

In the end, the clock had its say! He should have tried 35.g4 ♔e5 36.♘d4 ♘b7 (after 36...♔d5 White plays 37.h5! gxh5 38.gxh5 ♔e5 39.♔g3 f5 40.f4+ exf3 41.♔xf3, with equality) 37.♔g3 ♘c5 38.♘c6+ ♔d6 39.♘d4, and Black can't really make progress here.

35...♔e5 36.♘b4 ♘c4 37.♔f2 h5 38.g4 ♘d2 39.gxh5 gxh5 40.♘c6+



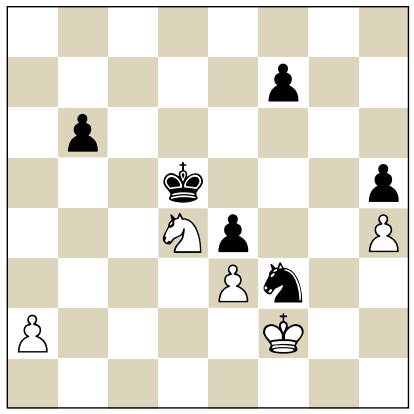
40...♔d5?

For some reason both of us thought that after this king move, 41.♘d4 was the only move. Black could have retained his advantage with 40...♔d6 41.♘d8 ♘xf3 42.♘xf7+ ♔e6 43.♘d8+ ♔e7 44.♘c6+ ♔d6 45.♘d4 ♘xh4.

41.♘d4?

Played instantly. Instead, White could have made a draw with 41.♘e7+ ♔d6 (or 41...♔c4 42.fxe4 ♘xe4+ 43.♔f3 ♘c3 44.♔f4 ♘xa2 45.♔g5 b5 46.♔xh5 b4 47.♘c6 ♔d3 48.♘xb4+ ♘xb4 49.♔g5, and the black knight will return in time to stop the white h-pawn) 42.♘f5+ ♔e5 43.♘g7 ♘xf3 44.♔g3!.

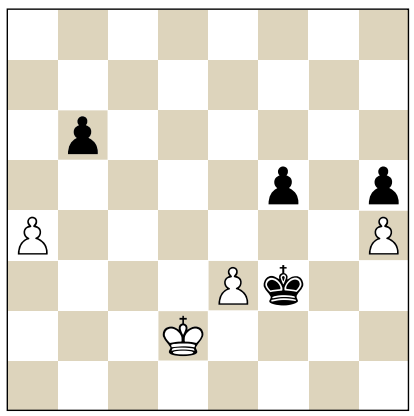
41...♘xf3



42.♘xf3

This loses by force, but in any case White is much worse now, also after 42.♘f5 ♔e5 43.♘g3 ♘xh4 44.♘xh5 ♘g6.

42...exf3 43.♔xf3 ♔e5 44.a4 f5 45.♔e2 ♔e4 46.♔d2 ♔f3



White resigned.

During the game I had a feeling that I played a great game, but alas that didn't last very long. So, thanks to Nils I had 8/9, which looks quite impressive, except that last year Erwin l'Ami had 8½/9. I drew the last round without goofing up and won the event with 8½/10.

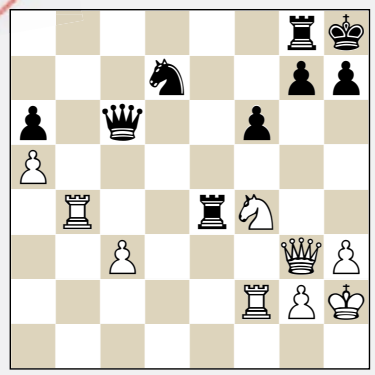
I have played in Reykjavik many times and it gets better every time. The playing conditions are superb and the organizers ensure that it's a very competitive field. There is something for everyone while at Reykjavik, and I am sure I will be back there to defend my title next year! ■

Reykjavik 2016

				TPR
1	Abhijeet Gupta	IND 2634	8½	2799
2	Dmitry Andreikin	RUS 2732	8	2781
3	Ivan Cheparinov	BUL 2684	7½	2701
4	Richard Rapport	HUN 2720	7½	2705
5	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE 2747	7½	2761
6	Sergei Movsesian	ARM 2653	7½	2687
7	Francesco Rambaldi	ITA 2541	7½	2629
8	Sergey Grigoriants	RUS 2587	7½	2597
9	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM 2653	7½	2622
10	Nils Grandelius	SWE 2646	7½	2562
11	Aryan Tari	NOR 2553	7½	2504
12	Gawain Jones	ENG 2645	7	2632
13	Alexander Shabalov	USA 2520	7	2565
14	Tania Sachdev	IND 2370	7	2599
15	Marc Esserman	USA 2458	7	2561
16	Alejandro Ramirez	USA 2564	7	2530
17	Alexander Beliavsky	SLO 2630	7	2555
18	Gabriel Sargissian	ARM 2702	7	2595
19	Jonas Lampert	GER 2472	7	2469
20	Sabino Brunello	ITA 2567	7	2577
21	Hjorvar Steinn Gretarsson	ISL 2572	7	2626
22	Thorben Koop	GER 2416	7	2392
23	Elisabeth Pähtz	GER 2474	6½	2526
24	Tibor Antal Kende	HUN 2406	6½	2466
25	Awonder Liang	USA 2405	6½	2445
26	Mads Andersen	DEN 2479	6½	2475
27	Moulthun Ly	AUS 2500	6½	2438
28	Diego Rafael Di Berardino	BRA 2511	6½	2502
29	Nikita Petrov	RUS 2464	6½	2505
30	Stefan Bromberger	GER 2532	6½	2542
31	Simen Agdestein	NOR 2610	6½	2502
32	Kristian Holm Stuvik	NOR 2414	6½	2433
33	Justin Sarkar	USA 2426	6½	2503
34	Mihail Marin	ROU 2597	6½	2447
35	Gudmundur Kjartansson	ISL 2446	6½	2422
36	Hannes Stefansson	ISL 2600	6½	2431
37	Alexandre Vuilleumier	SUI 2366	6½	2343
38	Anna-Maja Kazarian	NED 2248	6½	2315
39	Christian Braun	GER 2386	6½	2377
40	Sebastien Midoux	FRA 2342	6½	2289
41	James Jackson	ENG 2347	6½	2290
42	Tatev Abrahamyan	USA 2324	6½	2407
43	Sigurdur Sigfusson	ISL 2299	6½	2200
44	Michael Dougherty	CAN 2169	6½	2256
45	Bragi Thorfinnsson	ISL 2419	6	2461
46	Justin Tan	AUS 2441	6	2419
47	Stefan Kristjansson	ISL 2478	6	2407
48	Henrik Danielsen	ISL 2488	6	2405
49	Johan-Sebastian Christiansen	NOR 2401	6	2314
50	Jovana Vojinovic	SRB 2366	6	2321

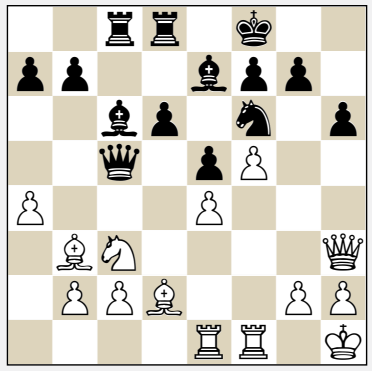
235 players, 10 rounds

MAXIMize your Tactics Solutions



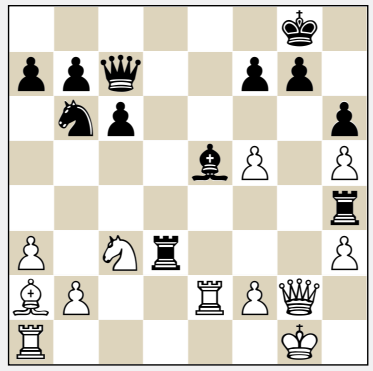
1. Fedorchuk-Bologan
Sibenik 2011

40.♘g6+! Extending the 4th rank for the X-raying rook. Black resigned since he is checkmated after 40...hxg6 41.♕h4+! ♖xh4 42.♖xh4.



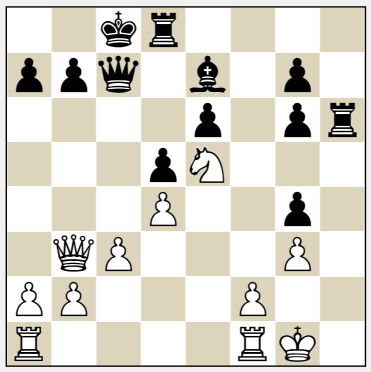
2. Dzhumaev-Popov
Chennai 2016

19.♗xh6! gxh6 20.♕xh6+ ♔e8 21.♗e6! Preventing the king's escape. Black resigned as 21...fxe6 22.fxe6, 21...♘g4 22.♕h5 or 21...♖c7 22.♕h8+ ♗f8 23.♕xf6 are all disastrous.



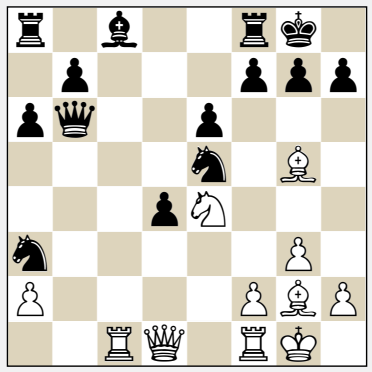
3. Krupenski-Gelfand
Tallinn 2016

The following forced sequence produced a big upset at the start of the event. **25.f6! ♗xf6 26.♖e8+ ♔h7 27.♕g6+! fxg6 28.♗g8+ ♔h8 29.♗f7+** Mating on the next move.



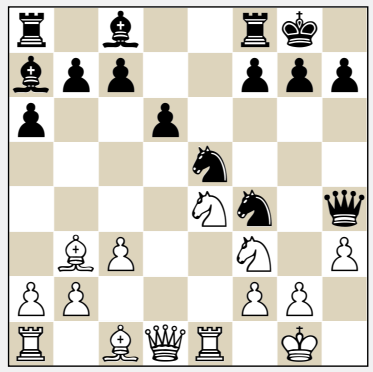
4. Anikonov-Rublevsky
Khanty-Mansiysk 2015

22...♕xe5! Depriving White of the defensive possibility 23.♘xg4. **23.dxe5 ♖dh8** White resigned as mate is unavoidable: 24.f4 ♗c5+ 25.♖f2 ♖h1+ 26.♔g2 ♖8h2 mate.



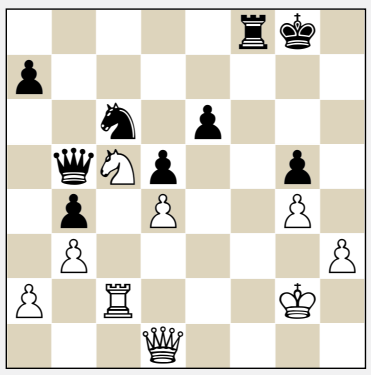
5. Howell-Jumabayev
Tallinn 2016

17.♘f6+! gxf6 18.♗xf6 ♘g6 19.♕h5 e5 Black pinned his hope on this move but... **20.♖c6! ♕d8** 20...bxc6 21.♕h6. **21.♕h6 ♕xf6 22.♖xf6** Black resigned soon after.



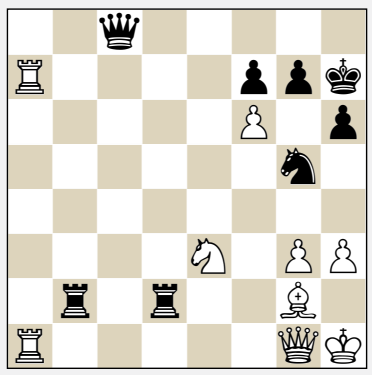
6. Nisipeanu-Haast
Wijk aan Zee 2016

15...♘xh3+! 16.♔f1 16.gxh3 ♗xf2+! 17.♘xf2 ♕g3+ 18.♔f1 ♗xh3+ 19.♘xh3 ♕xh3+ 20.♔f2 ♘g4+ 21.♔e2 ♕g2+ 22.♔d3 ♘f2+. **16...♘xf3 17.♕xf3 ♗g4** With two extra pawns (0-1, 34).



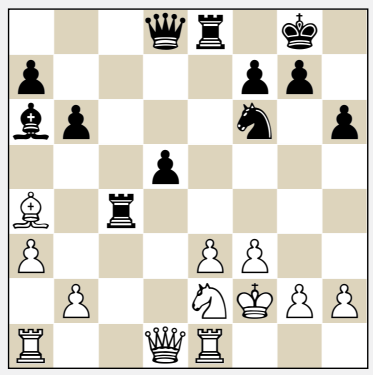
7. Delgado-Rodriguez
Florianopolis 2016

32...♘xd4! 33.♕xd4 ♕f1+ 34.♔h2 ♖f3 35.♖g2 ♕e1! The point. Otherwise Black is lost. White resigned: the threat is 36...♖xh3+! 37.♔xh3 ♕h4 mate, and 36.♖g1 ♕h4! doesn't help.



8. Stojanovic-Vulevic
Basel 2016

39...♖xg2! Not 39...♘f3 40.♘f1! ♖xg2 (40...♘xg1 41.♗e4+!, e.g. 41...♔g8 42.♖a8) 41.♕xg2 ♖xg2 42.♔xg2. **40.♘xg2 ♘f3!** The immediate capture on h3 would do no harm. **41.♘f4 ♘xg1 42.♖xg1 ♕c6+ 43.♖g2 ♖b1+ 44.♔h2 ♕c1** White resigned.



9. Tazbir-Klekowski
Hucisko 2016

21...♖xe3! 22.♔xe3 22.b3 ♖ce4! 23.fxe4 ♘g4+ 24.♔g1 ♕h4 and mate. **22...♕e7+ 23.♔f2** 23.♔d2 ♘e4+! 24.fxe4 ♕g5+. **23...♕c5+ 24.♔g3** 24.♔f1 ♘g4! 25.fxg4 ♖f4+. **24...♘e4+** White resigned – 25.fxe4 (25.♔h3 ♗c8+ 26.g4 ♕f2) 25...♕e3+ and mate.

Hans Ree

Groundhog Day

The title of Daniel Gormally's recent book – *Insanity, Passion And Addiction, A Year Inside The Chess World* – might as well have been 'Penury, Loneliness and Monotony'. **HANS REE** finds that Gormally has written a lively and often comical book about a bleak subject.

The most exhilarating moment of Daniel Gormally's year in chess, as described in the introduction to his book, is when he narrowly escapes from death in a car accident. With a friend, Matthew Wilson, he is in a car in the South of France. Wilson does the driving, since Gormally doesn't know how to drive, a fact that Wilson only became aware of when at one point during their trip, when the car was stuck, he gave his friend the driver's seat, in the mistaken expectation that he would be able to find the brake.

Now they see a car just ahead of them that has gone out of control. It collides with a car immediately in front of them and for a moment they feel sure that they will crash, too.

But it doesn't happen. They stop just short of the accident site. There is debris all around them. They drive on, shaken, and Gormally is stirred to a contemplation of his life.

In the immediate aftermath of this terrifying almost-accident he realizes how it made him feel alive and how much, for the last few years, he had been living in a little bubble where everything was too easy and too safe. As he explains, one reason to write this book had been to confront his fears and thereby to improve his life. At least he should overcome his fear of flying, which would help him to play more, improve his rating, get better... It would be a domino effect. At the end of the book the reader does not know if Gormally has succeeded in this, but there is hope.

Though there are chapters about general issues in chess, such as cheating, computer preparation or the triumph of youth, most of the book is devoted to an individual problem, although he probably shares that with many players. How can you make a living from chess when you are not a top player?

Gormally is 39 years old. His present rating is 2490. It has been higher, but in the last few years it has also been lower, so at least in the short term the tendency is slightly up. But in the long term the direction will be down, as it is for everyone who keeps on playing after his prime.

Antarctic allure

Well, maybe not everyone. Recently, a tweet by my esteemed fellow columnist Nigel Short said: 'Moved up to #3 on the English ranking list by the cunning expedient of not playing any rated games.' How come? Had he not just won the Ballarot Open in Australia? Had that not been rated?

Having become curious, I learned from a google check that this tournament had indeed been unrated, at Nigel's request, and that it was not the first time that he had stipulated this condition for his participation in a tournament.

Since the 1980s I have lost about 200 rating points. Why had I not thought about this cunning expedient? Obviously because I would have been laughed at if I had tried. One needs a high standing to get away with such measures to defend it.

Nigel, King of the Opens, twittered that Antarctica is now the only continent where he hasn't won a tournament. What is he waiting for to add the final jewel to his crown? There are chess players among the scientists and technicians at the Antarctic stations. They play on the Internet and will undoubtedly be delighted to meet the famous Nigel Short in the flesh. Surely they won't insist that the little tournament in his honour will be rated.

In February there was a match between Hou Yifan and the Chilean IM Cristobal Henriquez Villagra that was originally scheduled to take place partly in Patagonia and partly in Antarctica. Unfortunately, the trip to the Antarctic was deemed too dangerous for both players and officials because of the bad weather, which means that

Nigel can still be the first titled player to set foot on the frozen continent. I think he will be there soon.

Stuck halfway in life

What to do when your rating and your strength drop below the level that is necessary for a decent income? A chess pro who in the middle of his life journey finds himself inside a dark wood with no straight road ahead has several options.

1. Try to get better; a gallant option, but an uphill struggle. 2. Expand his activities within the chess world by writing or coaching (high-class babysitting, in Gormally's words). 3. Find a completely different profession. 4. Just drift and hope that something will come up, for instance a rich and beautiful young heiress with a penchant for falling for struggling chess professionals.

From the way Gormally describes himself, it seems that temperamentally he would be most inclined to follow option 4. However, he knows very well that this won't do, and in fact, as he insists at the beginning, the book was meant as a way of self-improvement.

The journey is difficult. Some chapter titles are *The narrow part of adversity*, *The lonely life of a chess professional* and, most dramatically, Dylan Thomas's famous line, *Rage against the dying of the light*.

'Here is the deal', are the first words of Chapter One. The deal is not in his favour. Gormally lives in Alnwick, near the Scottish border. A sleepy but picturesque market town, he calls it. He doesn't mention the fact that in 2002 readers of the magazine *Country Life* voted it the best place to live in Britain. From his point of view, Alnwick has little to recommend itself. Gormally lives there because, like many Londoners, he can no longer afford to live in London. His chess life is lonely in Alnwick. Most English tournaments are in the South, and it always costs him a hundred pounds to take a train to London.

So the suggestion of his friend Matthew Wilson to join him on a trip to a French tournament was most welcome.

Passing delights

He finds Villard de Lans, the town where the tournament is held, a little jewel. After the tournament the two friends spend some days on the coast at Juan les Pins. Life is sweet. Though elsewhere in the book Gormally raves about beautiful girls, usually unreachable, here he notes that he and his friend Matt were progressing down the path of gay activity, and he admires a waiter, who is resplendent in his tight denim shorts and so camp that he wouldn't be out of place in *Glee*.

> 'Most of the book is devoted to an individual problem, though he probably shares that with many players. How can you make a living from chess when you are not a top player?'

What is *Glee*? I found that it is a campy American TV series, well-liked by the Obama family.

Dining on the beach, Gormally stares into the bay, with the sparkling sea and the fading sun in the distance, and muses that being a chess player might not be so bad after all.

Gloomy thoughts

But this is as much of a celebration of chess life as we will get. Gormally doesn't like his way of life and he fears that it will be endlessly and irredeemably repetitious. He is extremely self-critical, both of his body and of his soul. He calls himself the Gorm, which, as I gathered from a dictionary of slang, is something you'd rather not be. Like a stand-up comedian he knows how to use his self-depreciation for comical effect. He writes: 'Just imagine the conversations between foreign grandmasters when they discuss what countries they might visit in future... Come to England, the players there are very weak! The tournaments there are a piece of cake. At worst you'll get Gormally as top seed, and he is a patzer.'

Or, when he visits the zoo during a tournament in Amsterdam in 2015, he wonders whether in hundreds of years' time the Machines would watch us in our cages. Or whether we would be stuffed and put on display in a Museum, and the Machines will say: 'What's that exhibit there?' 'That's the Gormbeast. He became extinct in the early 21st century, when he failed to learn from his mistakes.'

The book is based on a blog by Gormally on Natalia Pogonina's website, and at least one reader of that site was struck by the incongruity of writing articles about the misery of chess and then adding an advertisement offering his services as a coach. Gormally has seen the light and now concludes that the innocence and wonder of his pupils should be preserved for a certain period. 'They'll learn about how terrible it all is later.'

Brutally honest, Gormally doesn't hide that he isn't always the nicest person to have around. Come on man, get yourself together, I often thought when reading this book. And when at the end of it he implied that he had indeed managed to do so and had found a way of escape from the confines of chess to the fascinating possibilities of life, I felt glad. ■

HANS REE

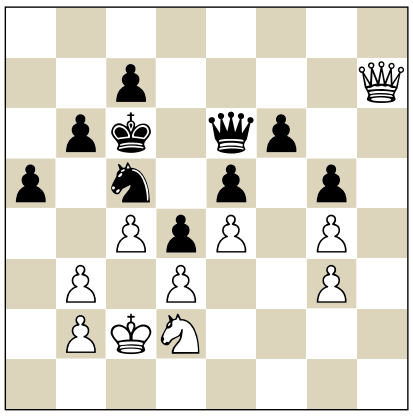
Jan Timman

The endgame, an endless journey

Many points can be won or saved in the endgame. Sometimes it's a matter of finding the right plan, sometimes it's a matter of knowledge, as **JAN TIMMAN** illustrates with some recent games.

In Olympiads and other team events, match points are the most important consideration these days, and even the narrowest possible win is generally a good result. In the final round, however, the situation may be different. To qualify for a medal, sometimes a bigger win is needed. This was France's problem during last year's European Championship in Reykjavik. The French team knew in advance that they would have to beat Holland 3-1 in order to get bronze. It quickly became clear that a narrow victory would be the most likely result, but to get to 3-1, Fressinet would have to beat L'Ami. Winning attempts against a strong and solid grandmaster have a way of backfiring.

Shortly after the first time-control, the position was as follows:



Fressinet-L'Ami
Reykjavik 2015
position after 46...♔c6

Black's superior pawn structure makes him clearly better, but because of the closed character of the position it still tends to a draw. In the meantime it had become clear that the French team was not going to win a medal, but Fressinet did not want to lose the game, of course.

47.♕f5

The correct plan. By swapping the queens, White can alleviate the pressure.

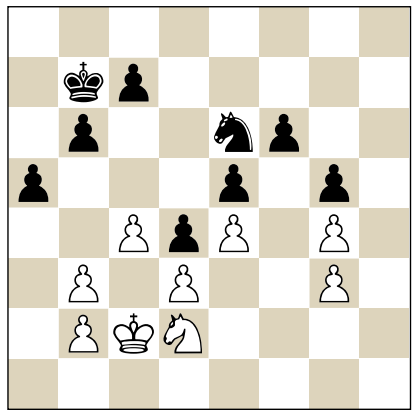
47...♔b7

An understandable move. Black would like to keep his queen without allowing its white counterpart to go to c8. But Black would have had better winning chances after 47...♕e7, intending to meet 48.♕c8 with 48...♕e6, when the queens will be swapped in more favourable circumstances than in the game. But even then, accurate play by White would yield him a draw. I will return to how exactly he should go about this further down.

48.♕xe6

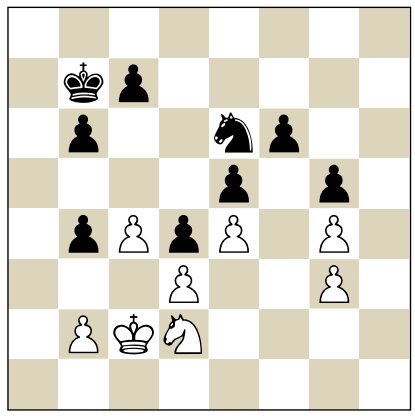
Also understandable. White wants to go for the knight ending as quickly as possible. But with 48.b4! axb4 49.♘b3 he could have forced a draw at once, since it results in a queen ending in which White has a fortress.

48...♘xe6



49.b4 A good idea. White sacrifices a pawn in order to close the queenside as completely as possible.

49...axb4

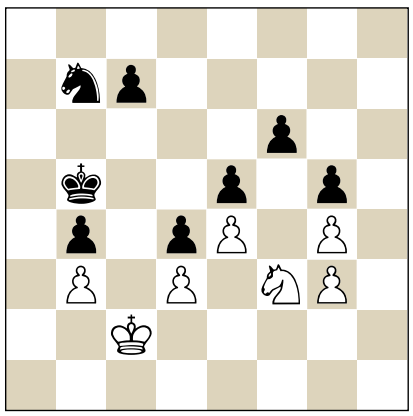


50.b3? But this loses. He should have gone 50.♘f3 for reasons that I will explain later.

50...♘c5? Who would not have played this? In virtually every middle-

game, c5 would have been the ideal square for the knight, but here it throws away the win – in the endgame, different rules apply. Correct was 50...♘d8! in order to get the knight to h6 as quickly as possible.

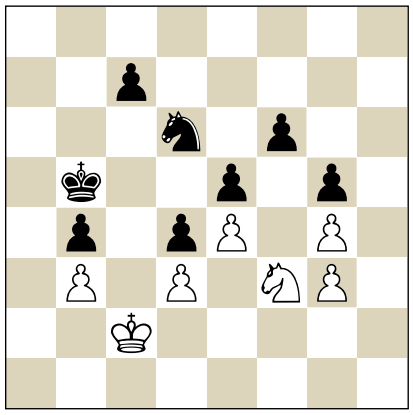
51.♘f3 b5 52.cxb5 ♔b6 53.♘d2 ♔xb5 54.♘f3 ♘b7



55.♘d2?

And now White is losing again, since the knight is stuck on the wrong squares. The only move was 55.♘g1!.

55...♘d6 56.♘f3

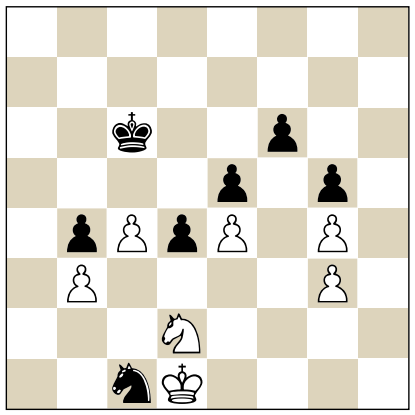


56...♘f7! L'Ami has found the correct plan: attacking the g4-pawn. White can only protect the pawn from h2, which will give Black the time to realize the breakthrough of his c-pawn under favourable conditions.

57.♔d2 ♘h6 58.♘h2 c5 59.♔c2 c4

There's nothing wrong with this move per se, but from a practical point of view it would have been better to play the king back and forth a few times to get some extra time.

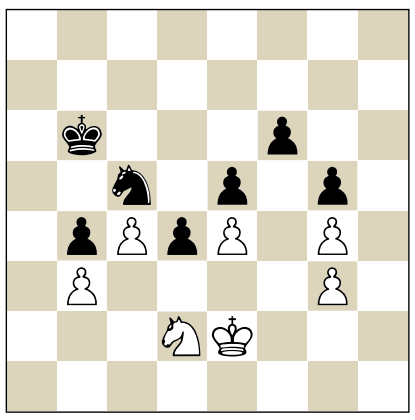
60.dxc4+ ♔b6 61.♔d2 ♘f7 62.♘f3 ♘d6 63.♔d3 ♘b7 64.♘d2 ♘c5+ 65.♔e2 ♔c6 66.♔f3 ♘d3 67.♔e2 ♘c1+ 68.♔d1



68...♘d3

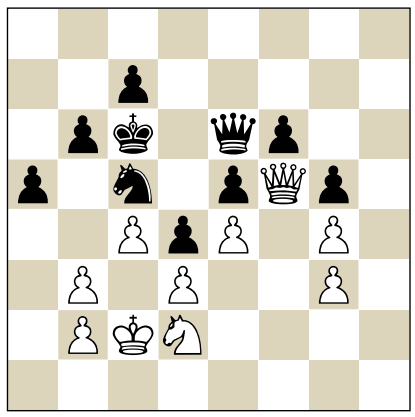
L'Ami hesitates. On *Schaaksite.nl*, Reinderman indicates a watertight winning plan for Black, starting with 68...♘a2. The plan consists of a number of phases. Black starts by transferring the knight to e3 in order to attack g4, forcing the white king to f3. Then he manoeuvres the knight to a1(!). Now the white knight is tied to d2 to protect the b-pawn, meaning that the white king remains cut off from the queenside. After some more preparation – a king triangle – Black sacrifices his knight on b3 for two passed pawns that will decide the issue. Concretely, this is what it looks like: 68...♘a2 69.♔e2 ♘c3+ 70.♔f3 ♔c5 71.♔f2 ♘d1+ 72.♔e2 ♘e3 73.♔f3 ♘c2! 74.♔e2 ♘a1! 75.♔d3 ♔c6 (the start of the king triangle) 76.♔e2 ♔d6 77.♔d3 ♔c5 78.♔e2 ♘xb3! 79.♘xb3+ ♔xc4, and the passed pawns are unstoppable.

69.♔e2 ♘c5 70.♔f3 ♔b7 71.♔e2 ♔a6 72.♔f3 ♔a5 73.♔e2 ♘b7 74.♔d3 ♔b6 75.♔e2 ♘c5



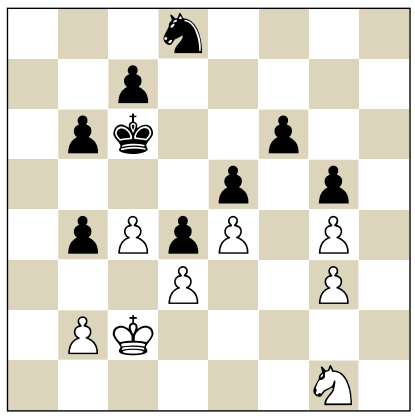
At this point, the players agreed a draw. L'Ami had little time left, and was probably tired as well. But Black is still winning here, since his knight can penetrate the white position again. White is powerless because his pawn structure leaves his knight only a handful of squares.

This brings me back to how White could have secured a draw if Black had played 47...♕e7 (instead of 47...♔b7). This is how it goes:



position after 47.♕f5

47...♕e7 48.♕c8 ♕e6 49.♕xe6+ ♘xe6 50.b4! (Black was threatening 50...♔c5, and the king penetrates via b4) 50...axb4 51.♘f3 ♘d8 52.♘g1!!.



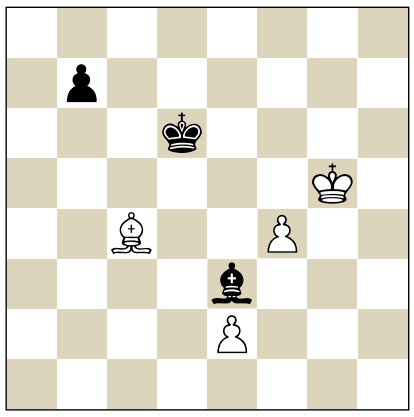
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

This is what it is all about! White must manoeuvre his knight to the safe square f2. After 52...♘f7 53.♘h3! ♘h6 54.♘f2 he is out of danger. If Black breaks with his c-pawn, White can capture with the d-pawn and play his knight to d3 before the black knight gets to c5. And if Black transfers his knight to b7, d7 or e6 before playing the breaking move, White will have the time to take his knight to b2, paralysing the position.

■ ■ ■

Jan Timman

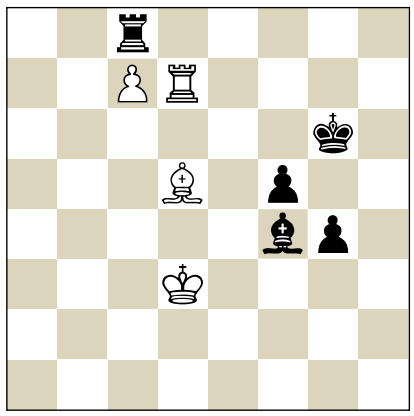
Dmitri Reinderman and Marcel van Herck, editor-in-chief of *Probleemblad*, pointed out to me that I had let an important moment in the endgame So-Akopian pass without comment in my analysis in New In Chess 2016/1.



So-Akopian
Doha 2015
position after 38...♔d6

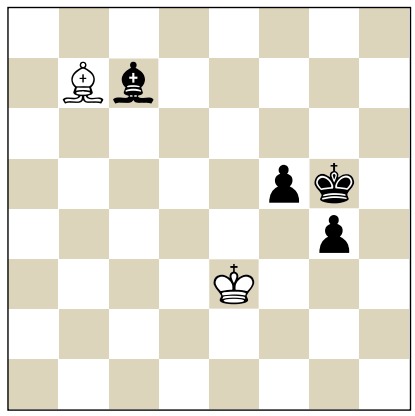
Here, So played **39.♔f5** after which the position is objectively a draw. But he should have taken his king to f3 as quickly as possible. To do this, 39.♔g4 would have been fine, while 39.♗b3 and 39.♗a2, anticipating 39...♔c5, would also have been enough to win.

Endgames with opposite-coloured bishops are not always easy to understand. Some time ago, Tukmakov said some interesting things about this in a lecture, observing how important it was to know exactly which positions in endgames with opposite-coloured bishops with two connected passed pawns for one's opponent will just manage to draw. He even thought it advisable to learn these positions by heart; only then could you liquidate to such an endgame with little time on your clock. You needed to be sure. Those were wise words. This year, two very strong grandmasters stumbled in precisely this endgame, shortly after one another.



Yu Yangyi-Jones
Gibraltar 2016
position after 41...hxg4

From the final round. Now White quickly played **42.♗b7**
There's nothing wrong with this. The endgame with opposite-coloured bishop is a draw.
42...♖xc7 43.♖xc7 ♗xc7 44.♔e3 ♔g5



At this point, Yu Yangyi fell into deep thought, and eventually played the abysmally bad
45.♗c8?
It's a mystery to me why White did not play the saving 45.♔f2. Black has no chance to make progress. If he tries running with his king, White can always attack the f-pawn with the bishop. The position would indeed be winning if all pieces and pawns were moved one square to the left, since this would enable the black king to penetrate via the kingside.
45...f4+ 45...♗b6+ would also have won. **46.♔e4** This was apparently his idea. Sometimes it is correct to play the king up, but here it isn't.

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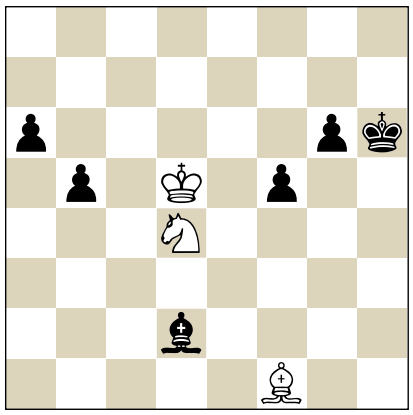
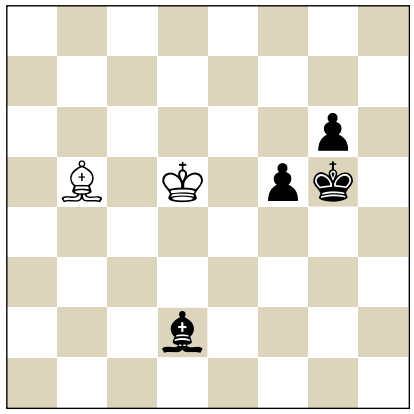
46...♔h4 How clearly the position is winning for Black is shown by the fact that he could even have wasted a tempo on 46...♔h5.
47.♔f5 g3 0-1.

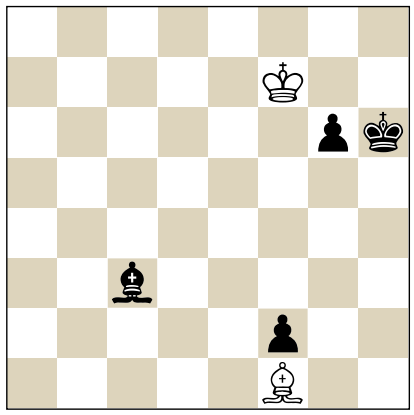


Hammer-Grandelius
Fagernes 2016
position after 57...f5

From the first round of the qualifying tournament for 2016 Altibox Norway Chess, for which Grandelius qualified convincingly. The basis for this victory was laid in this game. With four pawns for the piece, he is justified to harbour modest winning ambitions.
58.♘xb5
It is interesting to see what was written about this move on the various websites. Mike Klein observed on *ChessVibes*: 'Then he (Hammer) needed to hold a four-pawn-for-knight endgame, but mistakenly traded into a lost opposite-coloured bishop ending.'
And André Schulz on *ChessBase*: 'Liquidating into an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops, which is perhaps White's best hope for a draw. However, Black's king is too active.'
In reality, White had little to fear after 58.♘e6. There's no reason to think that Black had serious winning chances. White's decision to liquidate to the opposite-coloured bishops endgame is correct in itself, since it keeps the game within the drawing margin. But we will see that Hammer lacked the knowledge that Tukmakov had advised players to acquire.
58...axb5 59.♗xb5 ♔g5



60.♔e6?
Like Yu Yangyi, Hammer tries to manoeuvre his king behind the pawns, and here, too, this plan fails. White should have put his king in front of the passed pawns. The immediate 60.♔d4 would have been insufficient for this purpose, since the black pawns would become unstoppable after 60...f4! 61.♔d3 ♗c1! 62.♔e2 ♔g4 63.♔f2 ♗e3+.
White should have prepared the retreat of his king by first improving the position of his bishop. He can do this with 60.♗e2 (to neutralize the advance of the black f-pawn) or with 60.♗e8 (to tie the black king to the protection of the g-pawn). Only then does he withdraw the king via d4 to where it will be safe.
60...f4! The winning move here, too.
61.♔f7 f3 62.♗c6 f2 63.♗b5 ♗c3 64.♗f1 ♔h6



The winning plan. The white king remains cut off, giving the g-pawn a clean run.
65.♗e2 g5 66.♔e6 ♔g6 67.♗d3+ ♔h5 68.♔f5 ♔h4 69.♗e2 ♗d2 70.♗f1 ♔g3 71.♔e4 ♔h2 72.♔d3 ♔g1 73.♔e2 g4 0-1. ■

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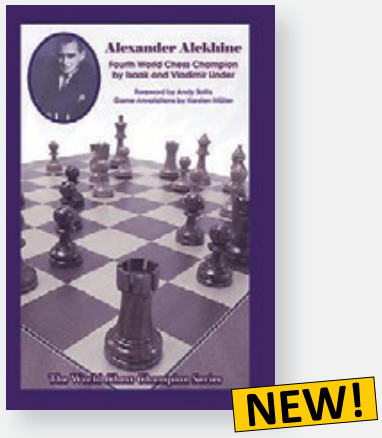

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Sadler on Books

The Golden Age of Chess Publications

The level of many new books is astonishingly high, **MATTHEW SADLER** writes, but there's also a place for books that explain the basic principles in an easily understandable manner.

I've played a little bit more chess than normal in the past weeks and I've spent quite a bit of time chatting to club players (rated somewhere between 1700 and 2200) about chess books and book reviews. A comment I've heard a few times now is that many of the books appearing nowadays are far too complicated for the average club player. It got me thinking because it fitted in with my experiences when working on a book of my own recently. I was fortunate enough to co-author the book with a player – WIM Natasha Regan – in exactly this rating range and she was challenging me continually to explain concepts in a simple, clear way that a player of her strength could understand easily. It made a huge difference and it would not have been the same book without this.

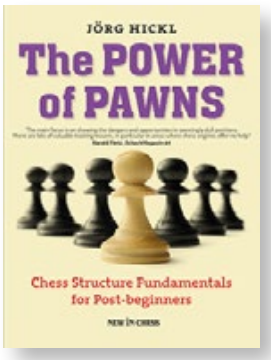
The paradox is that we are in the golden age of chess publishing. Compared with 10 or 15 years ago, the level of – for example – opening books is astonishingly high. Books like Negi's series on 1.e4 or Gawain Jones' excellent and profound effort on the Dragon in which top-class Grandmasters reveal secrets and consistently give concrete evaluations of positions (instead of the infamous 'unclear' or 'with compensation') were unheard of before. I'm constantly discovering unexpected facets to chess while writing these book review columns, and I tend to assume in my enthusiasm that if I learn something new from a book, then it should also be a great book for all readers. The frame of reference for a GM is somewhat different however to that of a club player so I guess that shouldn't necessarily be the only criterium. There's also a place for books and DVD's that don't break new ground but that do explain the basic principles in an easily understandable manner.

> 'While I was reading it at first, I was a little disappointed because I felt there wasn't anything I hadn't seen before. However, that is the point!'

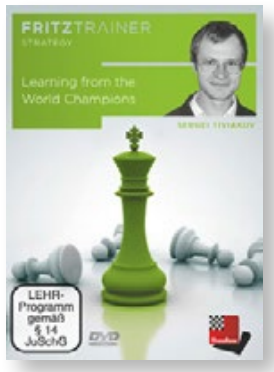
I was thinking about this while reading *The Power of Pawns* by Jörg Hickl (New In Chess). The author explains the goal of his book as follows: 'In the middle of the 90s, when in addition to top-level sport I focussed more of my chess activity on the organisation of chess holidays and chess training, the needs of the majority of club players were foreign to me. The demands of top-level chess are too different from those of occasional chess players. In more than 10 years of intensive work and communication with the participants in my holidays, the same questions about structures and evaluation of positions kept coming up. I became aware that club players have to struggle with a similar approach and similar problems... This book is intended to make a contribution to turning a club-player into an all-rounder, who can feel at home in any situation.'

I'm glad I got round to reading this introduction at some stage because it describes perfectly the expectations you should have of this book. While I was reading it at first, I was a little disappointed because I felt there wasn't anything I hadn't seen before. However, that is the point! The author is setting out what you need in order to have a balanced, basic understanding of typical pawn structures. Stronger players should have all of this knowl-

The Power of Pawns
by Jörg Hickl
New In Chess, 2016
★★★★☆



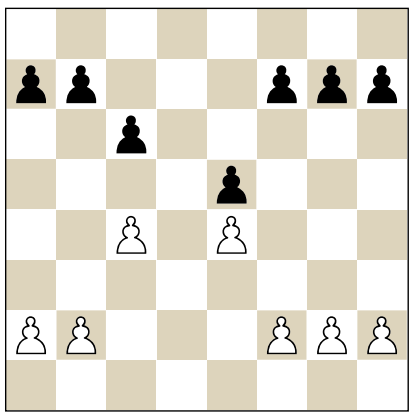
Learning from the World Champions
by Sergey Tiviakov
ChessBase DVD, 2016
★★★★★



edge already; the knowledge of club players is likely to be more uneven so this is a good way of bringing their understanding of all pawn structures up to a consistent level.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The first three chapters focus on the interactions between certain pieces and pawns (bishop, knight and rook) and the remaining seven chapters treat the following typical pawn structures: Hanging pawns, Isolated pawns, Backward pawns, Passed pawns, Doubled pawns, Weak squares and Pawn chains. Each of the pawn structure chapters is introduced with a definition of the structure and an explanation of typical plans for White and Black. After that, Hickl annotates 8 or 9 model games lightly to illustrate the theme of the chapter.

I'll just show you an example of one of these definitions to give you an idea of the level of the book. Let's take the structure of the King's Indian Exchange Variation:



'Characteristics: The position is almost symmetrical, the only imbalance is the advanced white c-pawn, which can have serious consequences for the judgment of the position. In return for White's advantage in space on the queenside he has weak squares on c5 and d4. Sensible pawn levers are nowhere to be seen.

Plans for White: Since the advance f2-f4 would weaken the structure, only play on the queenside and in the centre is worth considering... It must always be borne in mind that White's own king's bishop is a bad piece and that the squares c5 and d4 must not fall under permanent control by Black. Getting in c4-c5 would solve both problems at a stroke. A preponderance in space, linked with the new outpost on d6, can lead to an advantage for White.

Plans for Black: The permanent weakness of d4 is a clear structural advantage. The significance of the c5-square is just as great. Black is aiming for complete control of these points as well as play against the bad white king's bishop. It is worth making efforts to reduce the number of defenders of the dark squares – e.g. ...♗g4x♘f3 and exchanging dark-squared bishops so as to be able to occupy d4 with a piece.

The d-file, often in White's possession, can be neutralised with the vis-à-vis of the rooks, or also ignored, as long as the entry squares are sufficiently protected. He must prevent c4-c5 by White since it overturns the then favourable evaluation.'

I'm not 100% in agreement with what's written. For example, White does play f2-f4 in such structures fairly often:

– The Modern after 1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.e4 d6 4.♘c3 e5 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♕d8+ ♔d8 7.f4.

– The Sicilian Kan in various lines, for example after something like 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘d4 a6 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.0-0 ♕c7 7.c4 ♘c6 8.♘xc6 dxc6 9.♕e2 e5 10.♘c3 ♗e6 11.f4.

– There are also countless examples from Réti openings (even Hickl has played one!) where f4 occurs, often supported by a pawn on g3.

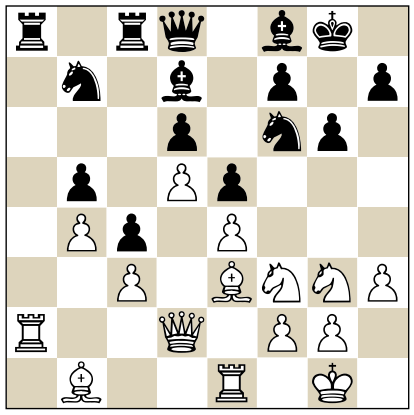
However, the rest is a good basis for playing and evaluating these structures so in general I'm pretty positive. I was hesitating between 3 and 4 stars for this book, but I think I'll push it up to a generous 4. I think this book will be a useful revision of essential knowledge for slightly stronger players and a good primer for average club players!

■ ■ ■

I've been very positive about Sergey Tiviakov's recent DVD's on the Italian and Spanish so I was looking forward to this latest offering from ChessBase: *Learning from the World Champions*. The DVD is a typical mix for Sergey: lessons from famous players related to examples from his own games. The introduction started a little slowly, but once Sergey moved onto the chess content, I was extremely impressed. It's a lovely way of learning. Sergey explains a couple of typical themes from a famous game and then shows from his own practice where he was also able to apply these themes. That gets you enthusiastic about this way of studying from the start! On top of this, when demonstrating his own games Sergey is also able to give extra detail about additional practical factors that cropped up in the game. It means that you don't just reinforce what you've learnt from the classic game, it also takes you up a little notch higher as well with new and interesting practical knowledge. Let me show you what I mean.

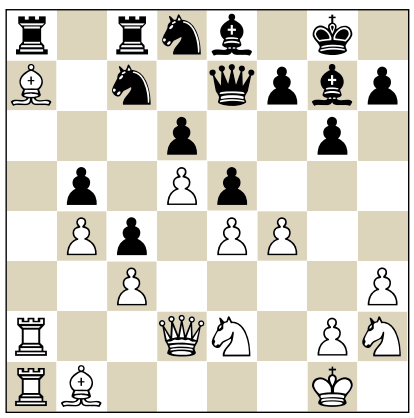
One of the games early on in the DVD is the classic Karpov-Unzicker, Nice Olympiad 1974. Tiviakov flags three key moments of interest in this game:

Sadler on Books

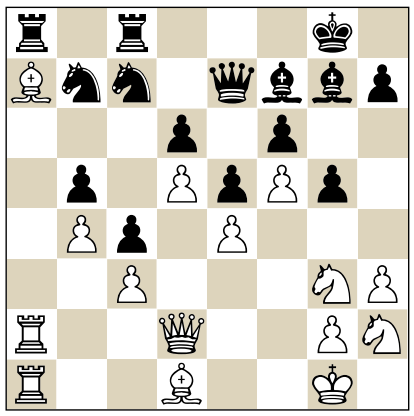


Karpov-Unzicker
Nice Olympiad 1974
position after 23...♕d8

24.♗a7 One of the most famous moves of all time, blocking the a-file with his bishop to give White time to double rooks with ♗c2 and ♖ea1 behind it! **24...♘e8 25.♗c2 ♘c7 26.♖ea1 ♕e7 27.♗b1 ♗e8 28.♘e2 ♘d8 29.♘h2 ♗g7 30.f4**

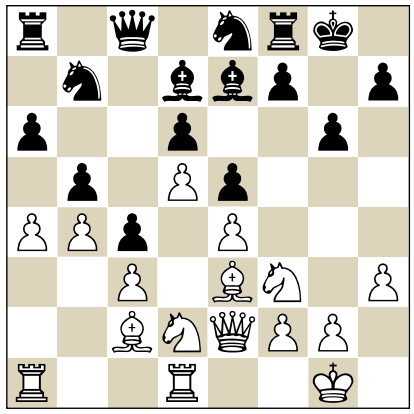


White's typical plan to expand on the kingside.
30...f6 31.f5 g5 32.♗c2 ♗f7 33.♘g3 ♘b7 34.♗d1



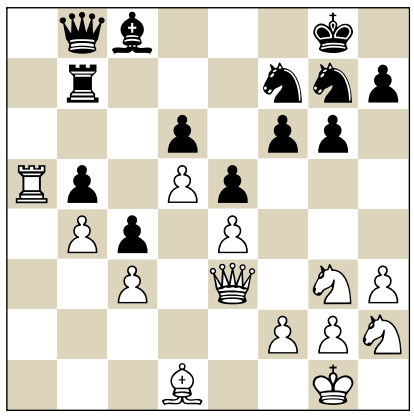
Preparing ♗h5, exchanging Black's good bishop and leaving him with the miserable specimen on g7!
34...h6 35.♗h5 ♕e8 36.♕d1 ♘d8 37.♖a3 ♔f8 38.♖1a2 ♔g8 39.♘g4 ♔f8 40.♘e3 ♔g8 41.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 42.♕h5 ♘d8 43.♕g6 ♔f8 44.♘h5 1-0.

Now take a look at Sergey's game against Norgaard from Morelia 2007.

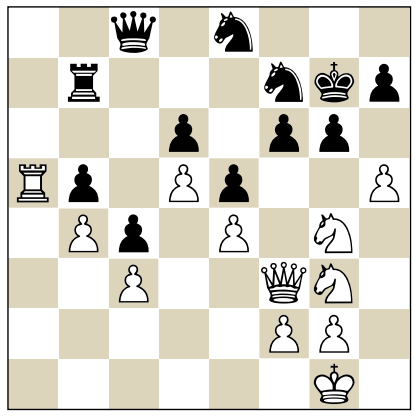


Tiviakov-Norgaard
Morelia 2007
position after 17...g6

Here Sergey explains with a smile that he really wanted to take on b5 and play ♗a7 just like his great hero Karpov! However, since White has not yet exchanged on b5, he doesn't have to be as elaborate as Karpov: he can simply double up behind the pawn on a4.
18.♖a3 ♘g7 19.♖da1 ♖b8 20.♘f1 ♘d8 21.axb5 axb5 22.♖a7 f6 23.♖1a6 ♘f7 24.♖b6 ♖xb6 25.♗xb6 ♗d8 26.♕e3 ♕b8 27.♗a5 ♗c8 28.♘g3 ♖e8 29.♗xd8 ♖xd8 30.♘h2 ♖d7 31.♖a5 ♖b7 32.♗d1



The same idea as Karpov: exchanging the light-squared bishop via the d1-h5 diagonal, this time to weaken Black's grip on his queenside light squares.
32...♖b6 33.♗g4 ♖b7 34.♕f3 ♘e8 35.♗xc8 ♕xc8 36.♘g4 ♔g7 37.h4 ♕b8 37...h5 38.♘e3. **38.h5 ♕c8**



And here we get the additional practical dimension that I talked about. Sergey explains that Black has defended well and that it isn't possible to break through directly. So Sergey begins to manoeuvre around without any clear direction to 'make the opponent fall asleep'! He explains this very well in the rest of this video, and you see how Black loses his concentration a couple of times, which is enough to lose the game.
39.♘e3 ♘c7 40.♘g4 ♘e8 41.♖a6 ♕d8 42.♔h2 ♕c8 43.♔h1 ♕d8 44.♘e3 ♕c8 45.♕e2 ♘c7 46.♖a5 ♖b6 47.♘g4 ♖a6 48.♕f3 ♕d8 49.♕e3 ♘g5 50.f3 ♕d7 51.♔g1 ♕c8 52.♔h2 ♕d7 53.♕f2 ♕c8 The final mistake. **54.♖xa6 ♘xa6** 54...♕xa6 allows Karpov's break f4 with maximum effect: 55.f4 exf4 56.♕xf4 ♘e8 57.♘xf6 ♘xf6 58.♕xg5. **55.♕b6** Black cannot hold b5 and d6. 1-0.

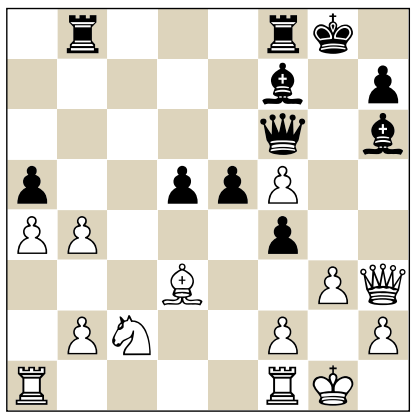
Later on, there is also a fantastic examination of a Tal opposite-coloured bishop ending against Radulov and a corresponding game of Sergey's against Miladinovic in 2015. It's high-class stuff! The really good thing about it is that Sergey's commentary is high-level without any long variations – I really think that a club player could follow his explanations without any trouble and learn enormous amounts from it. For me it's 5 stars! I hope you think so too!

I was recently lent a copy of *World Champion Perspective Vol. 1* by Viswanathan Anand (Metropolitan Chess) which seems to be the first of two DVD's by the former World Champion. The DVD's are based on edited highlights from lectures that Anand gave in 2012 and 2013 at the Metropolitan Chess Camp in Los Angeles. In the first DVD, Anand deals with four Sicilians (two Sveshnikovs and two Najdorfs) and also discusses building an opening repertory based on the opening approaches of Ivanchuk, Kramnik and Aronian. The DVD's are in a Q&A format so that the watcher is challenged to find answers to the questions that Anand poses during the lectures.

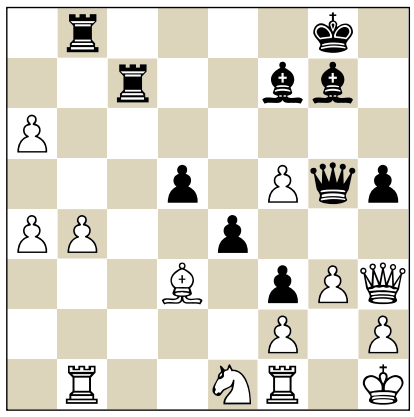
I did wonder a little bit about the level of the questions and the level of the audience participating in the lecture. I found some of the questions very tricky, to be honest, while some of the answers coming from the audience seemed to indicate that they were also having some problems! That little gripe aside, it's been very good fun to watch. Anand always starts off each lecture in a very serious mood, but as his enthusiasm for the position takes hold of him, he gets more and more interesting, instructive and entertaining. And the games! My goodness what a player! His comments on the game against my countryman Luke McShane is the absolute jewel of the DVD. How could Luke play so outstandingly and creatively and still lose? I'll just put the raw moves here and you can see what I mean:

Viswanathan Anand
Luke McShane
Germany Bundesliga 2003/04

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.♘d5 f5 11.c3 ♗g7 12.♗d3 ♗e6 13.♕h5 0-0 14.0-0 f4 15.♘c2 f5 16.♘cb4 ♘xb4 17.♘xb4 a5 18.exf5 ♗f7 19.♕h3 ♕f6 20.♘c2 ♖ab8 21.g3 ♗h6 22.a4 b4 23.cxb4 d5



24.♗b5 ♖fc8 25.♘e1 e4 26.bxa5 f3 27.a6 ♗g7 28.♖b1 h5 29.b4 ♖c7 30.♔h1 ♕g5 31.♗d3



A staggering concept. Vishy calls it the best move he's ever played in his career!

31...exd3 32.b5 d2 33.♘xf3 ♕h6 34.♕h4 ♕b6 35.♘xd2 ♖c2 36.♖bd1 ♖e8 37.f6 ♗xf6 38.a5 ♗xh4 39.axb6 ♗d8 40.b7 ♗b6 41.♖c1 ♗g6 42.♖ce1 1-0.

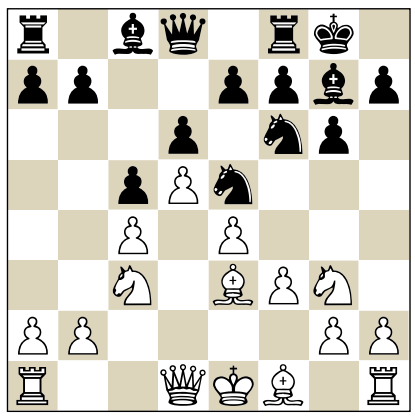
What I particularly liked about Vishy's comments during this game was his explanation of what he had seen and calculated, and where he had relied on his intuition. There's some nice humour too. At one stage he remarks that 'When you're young you can play these sharp Sicilians, and then later in life you can play Caro-Kanns. If you play the Caro-Kann when you're young, what are you going to play when you're older?' Thoroughly recommended!

■ ■ ■

World Champion Perspective Vol.1 by Viswanathan Anand
Metropolitan Chess, 2015
★★★★☆

Chess Informant 126
2015
★★★★☆

Finally, a blast from the past for me! *Chess Informant 126*. The last Chess Informant I saw was number 75 or 76, so I was intrigued to see how the formula has changed since 1999! The first shock was to see words! The last 130 pages are the good old-fashioned symbols but the first 190 pages are dedicated to annotations from an impressive range of the world's top players. The most striking feature though is the article by Morozevich on the combination of ...h5(-h4-h3) and ...b5 as a pawn sacrifice in the Sämisch Modern Benoni structures that arise after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♗e3 c5 7.♘ge2 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e5 9.♘g3



All in all, excellent fun! ■

Paul Hoffman

CURRENT ELO: Approx. 1900
DATE OF BIRTH: March 30, 1956
PLACE OF BIRTH: New York City, USA
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Brooklyn, New York, USA

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Cheese, dan dan noodles, New England clam chowder, sushi rolls, doughnut holes, profiteroles.

And what drink?
Coffee by day, red wine by night.

Who is your favourite author?
Oliver Sacks.

What was the best book you ever read?
(Fiction) *Goodbye, Columbus*; (Nonfiction) *An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness*.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Casablanca, *American Hustle* (I spend a lot of time in New Jersey).

What is your favourite TV series?
The Sopranos (I spend a lot of time in New Jersey).

Do you have a favourite actor?
Jack Nicholson.

And a favourite actress?
Jennifer Lawrence.

What music do you listen to?
Everything: Chance the Rapper, Morrissey, Nirvana, dancehall reggae, math rock, Beethoven.

What was your best result ever?
Reaching advanced adulthood without losing my mind.

What was the best game you ever played?
In my early teens I played Nicholas Rossolimo, former French champion, in the well-worn chess salon he owned in New York's Greenwich Village. I beat him on the Black side of a Rossolimo. Boozy and angry, he resigned by dropping his king into a steaming bowl of mussels.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Fabiano Caruana (whom I've known since he was seven or eight) and Magnus Carlsen. They are both class acts.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Bobby Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games*.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Their obsession with winning does not always serve them well off the chessboard.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Kindness. Understated intelligence.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Passive aggressiveness.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Flying ninja.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
James Gandolfini, Albert Einstein, and Marilyn Monroe.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Knight on rim, future dim – except when Fischer does it.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Shapeshifting.

What is your favourite place in the world?
Costa Rica.

What is your greatest fear?
Losing my mind.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
My son's drawings.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
No, but that's what makes chess so great. The real world is overrated.

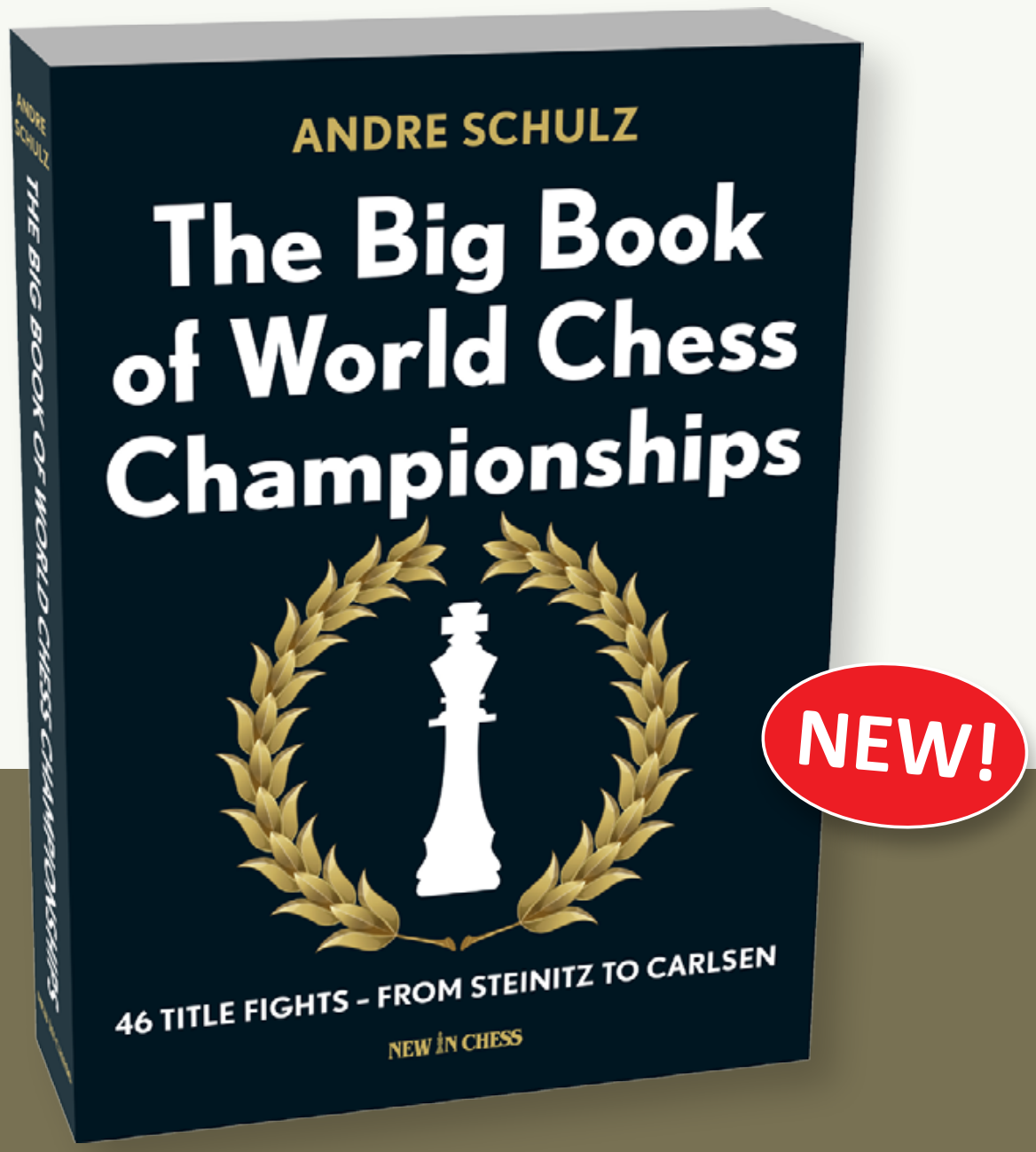
If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Make chess a professional sport.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Get rid of mathematical tiebreaks in important events like the World Chess Candidates' Tournament. Have a tiebreak match instead.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
The 2050 World Chess Champion will be a BMW. By then driverless vehicles will have decided that humans are in the way and done us all in. The autonomous cars will have eliminated national boundaries because they were unproductive artifacts of tribal rivalries among humans.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'All I want to do, ever, is just play chess.' – Bobby Fischer

Relive the magic of Capablanca, Alekhine, Botvinnik, Tal, Karpov, Kasparov, Bobby Fischer and the others...



"I like the selection of the games and the explanations are easy to understand and to the point. But the best part is how the story is told, complete with historical backgrounds and lots of anecdotes."
GM Karsten Müller, author of 'Bobby Fischer, The Career and Complete Games'

"An excellent documentary book that every chess player should have who is not just interested in the game itself."
Uwe Bekemann, Deutscher Fernschachbund

"Andre Schulz's story covers a lot of ground over a wide period of time and is full of interesting facts and assessments."
Martin Breutigam, Berliner Tagesspiegel

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